



# HOUSING ALLIANCE

February 22, 2021

House Committee on Behavioral Health  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Sanchez, Vice Chair Moore-Green, Vice Chair Nosse, Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance to express our support for HB 2417, which would require the Department of Human Services to provide a program to provide matching grants to cities or counties to operate mobile crisis intervention teams.

The Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of more than ninety organizations from all parts of the state. Our members have come together with the knowledge that housing opportunity is the foundation on which all of our success is built – individual success as students, parents, workers, and community members as well as the success of our communities. We represent a diverse set of voices including affordable housing developers, residents of affordable housing, local jurisdictions, and organizations working to meet basic needs in every corner of our state.

The Oregon Housing Alliance believes that everyone needs a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home. For nearly 16,000 of our fellow Oregonians, however, the basic human need of a safe, stable and affordable home is not within reach.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, for individuals already experiencing homelessness who are experiencing crisis, our police system is often the first line of response.

Police response for individuals experiencing homelessness often does not help address the issue at its core. Unfortunately, over-policing persons experiencing homelessness has been the norm for local communities without a readily available alternative to the criminal justice system. In 2018, the Oregonian reported that half of the arrests police made in the Portland area were of people experiencing homelessness. This pattern has historically shown to disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous and People of Color, who remain overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness in the United States. Rather than continuing to address the issue of homelessness through policing, the Oregon Legislature must find alternative programs that lift up individuals with opportunities to access needed services that the criminal justice system is not equipped to provide.

The Crisis Assistance Helping out on the Streets (CAHOOTS) program is a model that presents an alternative to police response to individuals experiencing a variety of issues spanning from mental health calls or non-criminal issues. The program, based in Eugene and Springfield, dispatches two-person teams of social workers and medics to respond to non-emergency calls. These calls would otherwise receive police response if it were not for this alternative program.

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<sup>1</sup> United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. "Oregon Homelessness Statistics." Available at [https://www.usich.gov/homelessness-statistics/or/#:~:text=Oregon%20Homelessness%20Statistics,and%20Urban%20Development%20\(HUD\).](https://www.usich.gov/homelessness-statistics/or/#:~:text=Oregon%20Homelessness%20Statistics,and%20Urban%20Development%20(HUD).)

As described by the White Bird Clinic, the organization administrating this program since 1989, CAHOOTS units are able to deliver “crisis intervention, counseling, mediation, information and referral, transportation to social services, first aid, and basic-level emergency medical care.”<sup>2</sup> The effect CAHOOTS as an alternative to police response is resoundingly positive. Of all 911 calls made in the cities of Eugene and Springfield, CAHOOTS responds to 20 percent per year. In 2019, CAHOOTS responded to roughly 24,000 calls, and only required police backup for 311 of those calls. For these tens of thousands of calls, essential services such as crisis intervention and medical care were performed by qualified individuals in the human services field, who had previously completed up to 600 hours of field training before being selected for the two-person teams.

HB 2417 proposes an expansion of the CAHOOTS model to other local governments that are interested in adopting it. The bill would create a \$10 million, 50 percent match program through DHS to either establish or expand existing CAHOOTS programs in Oregon. The program does not require the decrease of current law enforcement program spending, but intends to help take over certain calls where mental health services or other social services are requested.

We urge you to support of HB 2417, and provide the opportunity for other local governments to build up programs similar to CAHOOTS. Thank you very much for your time, and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

Loren Naldoza  
On Behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance

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<sup>2</sup> White Bird Clinic, “CAHOOTS FAQ.” Available at <https://whitebirdclinic.org/cahoots-faq/>

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## Housing Alliance Members

*1000 Friends of Oregon*  
*211info*  
*Aging in the Gorge*  
*Benton Habitat for Humanity*  
*Bienestar*  
*Bradley Angle*  
*BRIDGE Housing*  
*Business for a Better Portland*  
*CASA of Oregon*  
*Central City Concern*  
*Chrisman Development*  
*Church Women United of Lane County*  
*City of Beaverton*  
*City of Eugene*  
*City of Forest Grove*  
*City of Hillsboro*  
*City of Hood River*  
*City of Portland*  
*City of Tigard*  
*Clackamas County*  
*Coalition of Community Health Clinics*  
*Coalition of Housing Advocates*  
*College Housing Northwest*  
*Community Action Partnership of Oregon*  
*Community Action Team*  
*Community Alliance of Tenants*  
*Community Development Partners*  
*Community Housing Fund*  
*Community Partners for Affordable Housing*  
*Community Vision*  
*Cornerstone Community Housing*  
*DevNW*  
*Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon*  
*Enterprise Community Partners*  
*Fair Housing Council of Oregon*  
*Farmworker Housing Development Corp.*  
*FOOD for Lane County*  
*Habitat for Humanity of Oregon*  
*Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East*  
*Hacienda CDC*  
*Home Forward*  
*Homes for Good*  
*Housing Authorities of Oregon*  
*Housing Authority of Clackamas County*  
*Housing Development Center*  
*Housing Oregon*  
*Human Solutions*  
*Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization*  
*Impact Northwest*  
*Innovative Housing, Inc.*  
*Interfaith Alliance on Poverty*  
*JOIN*  
*Lane County Health and Human Services*  
*League of Oregon Cities*  
*League of Women Voters of Oregon*  
*Lincoln County*  
*Looking Glass Community Services*  
*Mainstream Housing Inc.*  
*Metro*  
*Mid-Columbia Housing Authority*  
*NAYA Family Center*  
*Neighborhood Partnerships*  
*NeighborImpact*  
*NeighborWorks Umpqua*  
*Network for Oregon Affordable Housing*  
*Northwest Housing Alternatives*  
*Northwest Pilot Project*  
*Oregon AFSCME Council 75*  
*Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices*  
*Oregon Center for Public Policy*  
*Oregon Coalition on Housing & Homelessness*  
*Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities*  
*Oregon Food Bank*  
*Our Children Oregon*  
*Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon*  
*Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives*  
*Portland Homeless Family Solutions*  
*Proud Ground*  
*Raphael House*  
*REACH CDC*  
*Residents Organizing for Change (ROC Oregon)*  
*Rogue Action Center*  
*Rose CDC*  
*St. Francis Shelter*  
*St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Inc.*  
*ShelterCare*  
*Sisters Habitat for Humanity*  
*Sponsors, Inc.*  
*SquareOne Villages*  
*Street Roots*  
*Think Real Estate*  
*Transition Projects*  
*Washington County*  
*Welcome Home Coalition*

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