



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2006 and House Bill 2004 (-3 amendment)
House Committee on Housing

Speaker of the House Tina Kotek
February 23, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2006 and House Bill 2004. These bills are complementary efforts to address the state's emergency shelter needs to assist Oregonians who are experiencing homelessness.

A combined version of the bills can be found in House Bill 4001-C from the 2020 Regular Session. Additionally, a 90-day version of the shelter siting provisions was included in House Bill 4212 from the 2020 1st Special Session last June. I also came before this committee this past December to re-introduce the policy concept and the related funding recommendation. I am pleased to be back today to review the provisions and update the committee on some changes that have been made after additional stakeholder conversations.

The most recent point-in-time (PIT) count from 2019 found that more than half (64 percent) of the nearly 16,000 people experiencing homelessness in Oregon were living in unsheltered locations. That was more than 10,000 individuals estimated to be sleeping outside on any given night. This was the situation *before* the greatest public health crisis of our lifetimes. The COVID-19 pandemic has only magnified this crisis, and we will not have an accurate picture of the true extent of the disaster until the next PIT count.

I am hopeful that the eviction moratorium extension we passed last December, coupled with infusions of significant state and federal resources for emergency rent assistance, will go far to keep Oregonians housed during the pandemic and beyond. But I urge us to maintain our emergency mindset to take on our state's emergency shelter shortage. We are still months away from a return to normal, and our unsheltered neighbors will continue to face enormous risks from the virus. Local governments, many of whom are seeking grants through Project Turnkey, are eager to get access to the tools in these bills as soon as possible. You will hear from some of them today.

House Bill 2006 and House Bill 2004 are companion bills: House Bill 2006 includes the policy provisions related to the emergency shelter siting authority and other needs, and House Bill 2004 contains funding allocations for shelter operations and navigation centers in key locations across the state.

House Bill 2006 does the following related to emergency shelters (Sections 2 through 4):

- Requires local governments to waive design, planning, and zoning regulations for approving the siting of emergency shelters;

- Shelters would have to comply with applicable building codes, have adequate transportation access and not pose any identifiable public health or safety concern;
- Shelters could not be sited on land designated as natural disaster/hazard (e.g., flood plains) or in places where there is an environmental hazard;
- The operator of the shelter must be either a local government, an organization with two years of experience operating emergency shelter using best practices, or a nonprofit who can partner with the above entities;
- The siting authority expires July 1, 2022, but the shelter may remain open after the sunset; and
- Should the shelter cease to operate, the normal land use regulations would apply again.

With regard to transitional housing and overnight camping, the bill clarifies and expands existing authority available to local governments (Sections 5 and 6).

The bill also provides the authority for Oregon Housing and Community Services to fund technical assistance, shelter services, and navigation centers (Sections 7 through 11).

At the request of stakeholders, I made a handful of modifications reflected in the current draft. We were able to improve the bill with the lessons learned from the temporary shelter siting authority given to local governments from the 2020 1st Special Session bill.

Here is a summary of the changes from the 2020 Regular Session bill:

- The definition of emergency shelter was expanded from “a building” to “a building or cluster of buildings” to ensure inclusion of innovative solutions like tiny home villages and pallet shelter pods, which many communities are using.
- An emergency shelter will be required to begin operating within two years of receiving siting authority. Cities reported that it would be administratively burdensome to track and manage siting permission beyond this timeframe.
- An emergency shelter sited under this bill (which is required to provide shelter services at no cost), that also has additional space to offer other residential services for individuals transitioning from unsheltered homeless status, may charge a fee of no more than \$300 per month per client and only to clients who are financially able to pay the fee and who request the services.

House Bill 2004 with the -3 amendment seeks to appropriate \$45 million to support shelter capacity statewide and the creation of navigation centers in certain locations. This funding is absolutely critical to move the state forward in its moral responsibility to assist local governments in their efforts to help unsheltered Oregonians. The bill asks for the following:

- \$26.5 million in grants for increasing low-barrier shelter capacity, providing necessary facilities/amenities (e.g., restroom and hygiene facilities) and rapid rehousing services;
- \$16.5 million for navigation centers, in Bend, Eugene, McMinnville, Medford and Salem; and
- \$2 million to Oregon Housing and Community Services to develop and provide technical assistance.

In the last regular session, the combined bill passed unanimously out of this committee – in recognition, I believe, that dramatic measures were necessary to meet the moment. That crisis has only deepened, and so must our resolve to address it. House Bill 2006 and House Bill 2004 are essential for the critical effort.

Thank you for the time and I’m happy to take your questions.