

Disinvesting in Local Solutions During a Pandemic

Oppose House Bill 2100

March 1, 2021

Dear Esteemed Committee Members:

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and devastating wildfires, Community Services Consortium (CSC) has significantly stepped up, increasing our capacity to provide emergency assistance to help families in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties. During 2020, CSC provided:

- 5,000,000 lbs. of food to hungry households
 - \$3.7M in rental assistance to more than 750 households
 - \$2.3M in utility payment assistance for more than 3,000 households
 - \$300,000 in paycheck assistance to 100 COVID-impacted families
- More than 500 families have received 1:1 assistance and individualized wrap-around services such as help paying bills, deliveries of food and diapers, and much more to enable them to quarantine safely

Our work to alleviate poverty is done in partnership with more than 300 non-profit and for-profit organizations, faith-based organizations and school districts, through local programs designed to meet the needs of our community. We share goals around strengthening services for culturally specific and responsive organizations and will continue to prioritize this within our network. A partial list of the partners to whom we have provided funds is below:

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|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • CARDV | • Family Assistance & Resource Center |
| • Casa Latinos Unidos | • Jackson Street Youth Services |
| • Centro de Ayuda | • Lincoln County Child Care Coalition |
| • CHANCE | • Room at the Inn |
| • Corvallis Boys and Girls Club | • Second Chance Shelter |
| • Corvallis Daytime Drop-In Center | • Unity Shelter Group |
| • Corvallis Housing First | |

We have significant concerns about proposed amendments to House Bill 2100. These amendments will disinvest in local programs and require cuts to existing services and partnerships!

Populations we are currently serving have a high number of people with disabilities (mental, emotional, physical, and those with substance use disorders) as well as an uncounted number of members of LGBTQIA+ community, all who have experienced historic disinvestment. Under this proposal, they lose, as funds will be diverted at their expense to create a new, unproven

program within OHCS. This will also impact our ability to leverage critical federal funds that require matching state funding. The current service level allocated to Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties is approximately \$3.5M per year. This is a direct reduction of \$175,000 each for Benton and Lincoln Counties and \$350,000 for Linn County in one year alone. We know that our local counties do not have the ability to make up the lost revenue. The projected reductions will increase during subsequent biennia and with any new funding passing to the state from federal sources.

Without stability and secure funding through EHA & SHAP, long-term planning will stop, as there is no guaranteed financial commitment from the state to make long-term investments. This will unfortunately stop investments in capacity and infrastructure locally, critical elements to addressing the homeless crisis. **Support for Project Turnkey awards, for our local shelter operations, and for all homeless prevention and response activities would have to be reconsidered. These plans have all been based on the anticipated funding allocation and the longevity of those state funds. Leveraged funds from partners such as IHN-CCO, Samaritan Health, and other local philanthropists could be jeopardized due to the change in commitment of CSC funds as the foundation for specific projects in each county.**

This bill eliminates local input in the funding distribution formula. It replaces the current structure of a statewide funding formula being negotiated between communities and OHCS—a built-in check and balance—with a top-down allocation structure determined by OHCS and the HSC in their sole discretion. All of Oregon has housing/homeless needs, and all of Oregon needs to be involved in ensuring fair allocation of state resources.

While we are busy responding to a pandemic and other crises in our communities, we do not feel it is the time to start to dismantle a system that is effectively helping vulnerable families. These populations should not be ignored and stand to lose critical resources if there is a statewide shift in the funding allocation. As we look for solutions, we need to focus on expanding services, not a solution that helps poor people in one community at the expense of others currently receiving assistance. Thirty-six percent of the clients CSC currently serves are members of the BIPOC community. This bill will disproportionately impact those members of our community.

The process used to bring this bill forward is neither fair nor transparent. The bill was rushed and adopted without coordination or consultation with stakeholders. The bill was not approved by the State Housing Council before being placed on the legislative record. As of the week before the first hearing, the legislative counsel-reviewed version of amendments has not been uploaded to OLIS. This suffers from unintended consequences that you get without taking time to consider legislation and allowing for broad consultation. As Oregon continues to focus on the need for inclusion of all voices and incorporation of “lived experience” in policy-making, this bill does exactly the opposite by excluding the voices and experience of the current service-providers.

CSC would appreciate an opportunity to work with committee members and OHCS to find a consensus solution to work in concert that strengthens solutions to vulnerable homeless

populations and protects existing services that are currently keeping members of our community safe and warm despite unprecedented circumstances.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pegge McGuire", written over a horizontal line.

Pegge McGuire,

Acting Director