



Tillamook County Board of Commissioners

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TTY Oregon Relay Service

Mary Faith Bell, Chair

David Yamamoto, Vice-Chair

Erin D. Skaar, Commissioner

February 9, 2022

Dear Chair Fahey and members of the Committee,

I am pleased to provide this written testimony in support of HB4123. I would like to put forward the voice of Tillamook County and share our situation as one of the pilot counties.

As you know, Tillamook County is a small rural county on the north coast. What many people don't know is that we have the 2nd highest rate of homelessness per 1000 people of population in the state, and that we have the 3rd highest rate of unhoused students in the state.

This is a very heavy burden for the county, our seven small cities, our unincorporated communities and the agencies providing services to tackle without a well thought out plan. When this opportunity became available, I reached out to our cities and 6 of the 7 immediately agreed to join this effort along with our local community action agency. We have the political will and local commitment to make very good use of these resources.

This opportunity is also very timely as we have just completed a local stakeholder process to determine what the greatest needs are relating to homelessness in Tillamook County. The group has identified lack of local collaboration and a plan as the greatest concern. The first action selected by this group is to create a local continuum of care. We are members of the Rural Oregon Continuum of Care which allows us to apply for HUD funds, but planning done by that group is extremely challenging as it represents 26 of Oregon's 36 counties. We need a local body to create a local plan if we are going to be successful. These funds will allow us to move forward very quickly in forming this group, hiring staff to support the work of the group to increase collaboration and create a 5-year strategic plan.

I know there are many competing priorities for state funding and I know that this work is among the most crucial. Leaving people experiencing homelessness without other options is simply not acceptable. And leaving counties, cities and local agencies without resources to create a plan for responding assures failure. Tillamook County's burden is among the heaviest in the state, and we have done the pre-planning work to assure that we are ready to use these funds now.

I join the other 7 county/city partnerships in urging you to support HB 4123 to provide us the resources we need to create plan for our success and the success of those currently experiencing homelessness.

Sincerely,

Erin Skaar

Erin D. Skaar, Commissioner