



25 April 2023

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain, and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation:

My name is Jimmy Jones, and I am the Executive Director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency in Salem, Oregon. We serve low-income residents of Marion, Polk and nine other counties across Oregon. Annually we provide more than \$70 million in services and direct client assistance for housing, homelessness, energy and weatherization, and early learning programs to more than 55,000 Oregonians in poverty, in addition to a range of emergency services that shelter the homeless and serve wildfire victims. I also serve as the Vice President for Legislative Affairs at the Community Action Partnership of Oregon, and sit on the Housing Committee of the Racial Justice Council and the House Bill 2100 Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities. For many years, I have been an advocate for the homeless residents of our state.

We write to you today in support of HB 3556-2, which would be an improvement over currently existing law in Oregon. It will place needed sideboards around the towing of recreational vehicles, restrictions that are particular to time, manner and place, as we have done for our homeless residents living in unsheltered conditions. Since the Labor Day wildfires of 2020, and with the gathering rental costs and extraordinary inflation in Oregon the past few years, more and more Oregonians are living in RVs, which for many have become their last safe haven before becoming street homeless. Many RV residents are elderly, very poor, often sick and disabled, and some struggle with enormous barriers toward more traditional forms of housing. For many there simply is no other option. Given the gravity of the poverty crisis facing Oregon, and the correlated increase in RV living, local communities are struggling with the increasing number of RVs abandoned across Oregon. This increase has created problems for local governments and towing companies, who need to find a way to quickly dispose of abandoned property.

In that rush to tow and destroy, we want to make sure that no innocent person loses their home. Appearances can be deceiving. What appears useless and abandoned to some, is the only safe haven for someone else. It is often difficult to determine what is truly abandoned and what is actively being used by a temporarily absent owner, who may be in jail or in the hospital. HB 3556-2 places some process restrictions around current towing practice, which varies widely across the state and leaves too much to interpretation and personal discretion. For those who inadvertently lose their homes, many go straight into unsheltered living conditions. And they go there without their medicines, their family pictures, and needed documents to help them find housing. In some cases, the RV is the only shelter keeping medically fragile and vulnerable people alive.

No one is disputing the need for local government to tow abandoned, dangerous, burned out hulks, or RVs that compromise public safety. But we need to be careful here to establish a balance; to give government the authority it needs to protect the public, but balance also to protect the property rights of people living in RVs. HB 3556 provides adequate notice prior to towing, and the right to access personal property after a tow. These are life saving, critical protections that will keep people in their homes, and protect them from the loss of the only shelter they have.

We urge your support for HB 3556.

Respectfully,

Jimmy Jones  
Executive Director