



Testimony in support of HB 3440
April 27, 2023

To: Chair Golden, Vice Chair Olsen, and Members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
From: Deschutes County Commissioner Phil Chang

HB 3440 can provide communities within Deschutes County with new opportunities to address housing insecurity for youth and families with children by making funds available for housing placement/rehousing services, rental assistance, and development of new low income housing.

Currently, when Deschutes County auctions a tax foreclosed property we are required by statute to distribute the receipts from that auction proportionately to each of the taxing districts within the County. HB 3440 would provide the taxing districts the option to instead keep those receipts aggregated in a pooled fund that would be large enough to meaningfully address a key public policy goal – preventing and reducing homelessness among local youth and families. By some estimates families with children and unaccompanied youth make up 55% of the homeless population in Deschutes County.

I believe that the housing and homelessness package proposed by the Governor and recently passed by the Oregon House and Senate will be extremely helpful as many partners in Deschutes County work to increase housing availability and attainability and to reduce unsheltered homelessness. But that package is one-time funding, as was the ARPA funding that is currently supporting many homelessness and housing initiatives in my community. HB 3440 could help Deschutes County establish a long term funding source for homelessness prevention and reduction efforts.

Within my County I have spoken to many elected officials who see value in using tax foreclosed property receipts to provide housing security for youth and families with children.

- School Board and Community College members have emphasized how important a home is to students' ability to show up to school ready to learn.
- Library Board members explain the benefit to all users of our libraries if less community members need to use libraries as day shelter or a place to bathe.
- Rural Fire District Board members appreciate that less unsheltered homeless people camping in the wildland urban interface means less ignition risks and less difficult emergency transports.
- City Councilors are struggling to provide sufficient shelter space for our homeless neighbors and know that housing placement/rehousing services, rental assistance, and development of new low income housing can help to shrink the number of people requiring shelter.

It is important to note that passage of this bill does not require the affected Counties and the taxing districts within them to do anything. HB 3440 provides affected Counties and taxing districts with the option to use tax foreclosed property receipts in a new way if they so choose. If this bill is passed, taxing districts in Deschutes County will collectively evaluate whether we would like to exercise this option and what the governance and allocation priorities and methods would look like.



COMMISSIONER PHIL CHANG

I hope that the legislature will provide us with the flexibility to decide whether we want to exercise this option or not. The impact for youth and families living on the margin in Deschutes County could be tremendous.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss the details or implications HB 3440 for Oregon Counties and their taxing districts.

Phil Chang
Deschutes County Commissioner

