

Submitter: James Cook

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1530

I have been involved in addressing homelessness in Central Oregon for the past five years; as co-chair of the Homeless Leadership Coalition, as the convener of monthly Redmond Service Provider meetings, and as board member of two organizations operating shelter villages. I would like to address two shortfalls in the current legislation as I understand it.

1. The bill addresses operational funding only for shelter beds added through funding from the governor's 2023 Emergency Order. This unfairly prevents shelters that opened prior to the Emergency Order from receiving much needed operational support. At a time where all shelters face a difficult funding environment and the cost of staffing and providing services is rising, I urge the legislature to provide funding for shelters regardless of whether they received previous emergency funding.

2. Safe Parking was not eligible for the previous round of state emergency funding. I believe the rationale was that the funding goal was to decrease unsheltered homelessness and a vehicle, unless hooked up to utilities, is not considered shelter or housing by HUD. Therefore giving a person living in a vehicle a safe place to park isn't considered to be sheltering them. Nevertheless, safe parking programs have become an important part of our continuum of homeless services in both Bend and Redmond. I believe a distinction should be made based upon the services (oversight, safety, case management, sanitary facilities, etc.) provided at the safe parking site. People living in a functional RV shouldn't have to give that up to be considered sheltered. In many cases, traditional shelter is not a better (or available) option. I request that you consider allowing funding for safe parking programs that meet appropriate standards of care.

Thank you.