

Phoebe Pereda

1380 Glenwood Dr.
Brookings, OR 97415

House Committee on Housing and Homelessness

February 22, 2025

RE: Concerns and Recommendations Regarding HB 3644

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Breese-Iverson, Vice-Chair Andersen and Members of the Committee:

My name is Phoebe Pereda and I am a Councilor in the City of Brookings. I am writing to express my concerns and recommendations regarding HB 3644 and its approach to addressing homelessness in our state. While I appreciate the Legislature's increased investment in shelter funding since 2020, I believe HB 3644, in its current form, falls short of effectively addressing the root causes of chronic homelessness and may even exacerbate the problem. Despite significant state funding allocated to this issue, our community continues to struggle with the ongoing challenges of homelessness, and we are not seeing the improvements needed to make a positive impact in the lives of our constituents to include those experiencing homelessness.

My conversations with our local Community Resource Officers have revealed a troubling trend: agencies receiving funding are often providing day-to-day support that enables individuals to remain in their current cycles of homelessness, *rather than* facilitating pathways **out of** these circumstances. A persistent challenge in our community is chronic homelessness, often intertwined with unmet needs for drug treatment and mental health support – services that are severely lacking.

Additionally, the officers have specifically noted that service providers often focus on the "easy cases," those individuals who are more readily able to transition out of homelessness with minimal intervention. While this may show positive statistics, it neglects the chronic homeless population – the very individuals who are often the source of the most significant issues within our community and who require the most intensive and comprehensive support. This targeted approach leaves the most vulnerable and challenging individuals behind, effectively ignoring the core of the problem. Even when treatment options are available, significant barriers often prevent individuals from accessing them.

One Community Resource Officer shared a striking example of the challenges involved. She personally dedicated 40 plus hours to helping one individual secure placement in a treatment center, navigating the complex paperwork and bureaucratic hurdles that service providers should be assisting with. This highlights a critical gap: those in need of treatment often lack the capacity to complete the necessary documentation, and service providers are not always willing or able to provide the needed support. Furthermore, even after overcoming these obstacles, individuals can face additional, seemingly arbitrary restrictions. In the case mentioned, the individual was able to complete the methamphetamines medical detox process but was then denied placement in an in-house treatment facility simply because they smoke. These types of restrictions are unreasonable and counterproductive.

I recently had a very informative meeting with Sergeant Jason Antley of the Medford Police Department's Livability Team. He shared details about their successful "CHOP" program, a unified approach involving law enforcement, the judicial system, the city attorney, social service agencies

and non-profit organizations. Sgt. Antley emphasized that releasing individuals from jail back onto the street leads them right back into the circumstances that contributed to their homelessness in the first place, perpetuating the cycle. The CHOP program addresses this by meeting with individuals while they are still in jail, assessing their needs, and connecting them directly with service partners who can provide appropriate treatment and support immediately upon release. Instead of returning to the streets and the same destructive patterns, individuals are transported directly from jail to a treatment facility or other supportive program. This integrated approach has demonstrated a real impact in Medford, reducing homelessness and helping individuals break free from destructive cycles. Sergeant Antley shared an amazing statistic that underscores the program's success: in just two years, they have reduced the number of homeless encampments from over 180 to just 11. This is a testament to the effectiveness of their unified approach.

I strongly urge the state to thoroughly investigate the structure and success of Medford's CHOP program and consider implementing a similar model statewide. This proven, results-oriented approach should be the benchmark for any state-funded initiatives aimed at addressing chronic homelessness. We must remove unnecessary barriers to treatment and ensure that individuals are given the support they need to overcome addiction and rebuilding their lives through facilitating a comprehensive, unified approach. Simply providing shelter without addressing the underlying issues of addiction and mental illness, and without accelerating access to treatment, is not a sustainable or effective solution.

Furthermore, I believe HB 3644 lacks crucial accountability measures. Just as cities are required to have transparent public processes for expenditures, so too should agencies receiving state funds. These monies come from the hard-working taxpayers of our state, and they deserve to know how their money is being spent. Agencies receiving funding should be required to provide detailed accounts of their expenditures and demonstrate measurable impact in reducing chronic homelessness. If taxpayer dollars are going to be allocated toward combating homelessness, we must ensure those taxpayer dollars are being used effectively to help people *escape* homelessness, *not* enable them to remain in it. Continued funding should be contingent upon demonstrable results. We cannot afford to continue throwing money at this problem without a clear strategy, measurable outcomes, and a commitment to removing the very obstacles that prevent people from getting the help they need. I urge you to consider my recommendations and work towards a more effective, accountable, and results-driven approach to addressing chronic homelessness in our state.

I firmly believe a holistic approach that addresses the complex root causes of chronic homelessness is *absolutely essential* for creating lasting change. **This comprehensive strategy will promote long-term stability and well-being for all our communities, ensuring that every resident of Oregon's cities and town benefits.** I believe this is the *only* way we can effectively address this critical issue and create a brighter future for our state.

With gratitude for your dedication and service,

Phoebe Pereda, Councilor
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