

Submitter: Victory LaFara MSW
On Behalf Of: Dignity Village
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3644

Thank you for your time and attention to issues concerning shelter funding and program designs. I have a macro MSW, focusing on leadership in communities and organizations, alternative shelter design, and nonprofit administration. I have been cited in many studies and conducted a recent study via the Micro Village Expansion Project commissioned by Multnomah County on the Village Model, which interviewed 120 participants and 35 community members and providers. I was the director and program designer for Portland's emergency COVID response shelter program for 2 years. My day job is providing full time professional administrative advising, data management, advocacy, and leadership development for Dignity Village for the last 7 years. Dignity Village is the original. Villagers created the original Village Model in 2000 as part of an agreement with the City of Portland to lease land to operate their unique shelter community. The Village Model is democratically based, with the villagers being the voting membership of the 501c3, creating an inherently safe and empowering program. The Village Model gives people a community of organic supports and many opportunities to build leadership and professional skills. At Dignity, the villagers are elected to the Council and are the Board Officers of the 501c3. People go from the trauma of street life to feeling valued again. We also partner with a mobile housing agency to ensure that no matter where people go from Dignity they stay connected and engaged with their housing plan. We hope to be included in future advisory roles which might inform the policies that would be created by the proposed new oversight body, as we have 25 years of expertise and many evidence based sources to share. We hope to help remove barriers to government funding that cause unnecessary hardships for the Village Model and to encourage funding opportunities for staff positions that best support the unique needs of long term unhoused people and village model shelters. We are excited to see the state put forward funding which may make it possible for more unhoused people to experience the Village Model.