

Submitter: Richard Bruno

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB837

Chair Reynolds and members of the committee, I'm Dr Richard Bruno (he/him), a family medicine & preventive medicine physician and member of our local medical reserve corps practicing in Multnomah County (not as a Multnomah County employee), and I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 837.

As a Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteer, I have firsthand experience providing medical attention to people who are unhoused at winter and summer weather shelters.

The current requirement for the Governor to declare an emergency before the MRC can be activated creates unnecessary delays in providing critical medical care to those in need.

During last month's cold snap, Multnomah County mobilized six winter warming centers for nearly 1,000 people experiencing houselessness but struggled to mobilize enough MRC volunteers to fill the shifts needed to provide medical attention for those shelter guests.

Senate Bill 837 would allow the MRC to be activated without the Governor needing to declare an emergency, ensuring that volunteers like me can respond quickly to provide medical care when it is needed most.

Many other MRCs nationwide take on these responsibilities. A 2022 report from NACCHO (the National Association of City and County Health Officials) notes that over half of surveyed MRCs have non-emergency response capabilities and 1 in 5 are serving general, non-medical, services such as shelters and public health work.

I recommend a favorable report for Senate Bill 837 so that the MRC can be more effective in providing medical care to people who are unhoused, especially during times of crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit favorable testimony.