

**FROM THE DESK OF SAL PERALTA**

Attn: House Committee on Human Services & Housing

Re: Testimony on HB 4001

2/5/2020

Chair Keny-Guyer and members of the committee,

My name is Sal Peralta. I am a city councilor in McMinnville and vice-chair of the mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments.

I would like to express my support for an emergency declaration to address homelessness in Oregon. I understand that HB 4001 is a placeholder bill for this issue. I wrote an op-ed for the Sunday Oregonian on this subject last year<sup>1</sup> and would like to share a few observations from my research on the issue.

First, I'd like to point out that the other state to take this approach, Hawaii, issues regular emergency declarations to deal with different aspects of homelessness and housing affordability as they relate to that state's land use laws and other policies. Some years, they tackle workforce housing in a particular community. Other years, like 2020, it is micro-housing and emergency shelters.

From a regulatory standpoint, I would encourage you not to think of this as a one-off. As Hawaii does, you can use such declarations to redirect funding and make temporary or one-off fixes without disrupting a broader legal framework.

This year, my understanding is that you are going to provide funding for shelters in Salem and Eugene. It appears as though statutory changes to make it easier to site homeless shelters are also on the table.

In 2021, perhaps you will use an emergency declaration to address other policy areas -- such as one-off rebalancing of state regulations that make it difficult to site workforce housing in McMinnville and other places.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/2019/06/opinion-homelessness-is-a-statewide-crisis.html>

The point is that the emergency declaration creates a strategy that can allow us flexibly address this crisis without discarding existing laws or administrative rules that work well most of the time.

My second suggestion is that you consider an amendment to this legislation that establishes a multi-agency taskforce to address homelessness that is similar to the one that was created to help rural counties deal with the Solar Eclipse “Crisis” of 2017.<sup>2</sup>

That process brought together subject matter experts from a variety of agencies who worked with county and local governments to help address logistical and legal challenges associated with the expected crowds from the solar eclipse.

A homelessness task force could advise state policy-makers on changes needed to address local housing issues -- such as helping to map out future emergency declarations. But, more importantly, it could help local governments implement best practices to comply with 9th circuit restrictions on city enforcement of overnight camping; facilitate the siting and logistics of emergency shelter; and could generally improve coordination across state agencies and local governments in dealing with this crisis on an emergency basis.

I hope that your committee and leadership will consider these suggestions.

I have attached a backgrounder on homelessness in McMinnville that I put together last summer and a presentation by the McMinnville Planning Director on the challenges we have had over the last 50 years expanding our UGB. They may not inform your current emergency declaration, but I hope they will provide greater insight into the challenges that McMinnville and other communities are experiencing and that you will consider taking additional steps to help us address our city’s needs..

Thank you for your consideration and service,

Sal Peralta

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.oregon.gov/oem/Documents/2017\\_Eclipse\\_AAR.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/oem/Documents/2017_Eclipse_AAR.pdf)