Testimony in Support of House Bill 4001A (-7 amendment)
House Committee on Rules

Speaker of the House Tina Kotek
February 21, 2020

Chair Holvey, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the -7 amendment to House Bill 4001A. The amendment replaces the bill after the whereas clauses.

Since this is the first time this bill is before the House Committee on Rules, I want to give a brief rundown of how this bill idea developed and how we've arrived at this amendment.

Last August, Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) released the Oregon Statewide Shelter Study.[1] The study concluded: "Homelessness, especially unsheltered homelessness, is of catastrophic proportions in Oregon."

A few figures from the study particularly stood out, including that Oregon is one of four states in which more than half (61 percent) of all people experiencing homelessness were found living in unsheltered locations. That figure has since risen to 64 percent, which is more than 10,000 people, according to the state's most recent point-in-time count.

If a natural disaster struck and displaced the number of people I've just referenced, we would take immediate action and do something to get Oregonians into temporary shelter or permanent housing. We must have an emergency mindset to take on this challenge.

HB 4001A with the -7 amendment does the following:

- Shelter Siting: Requires local governments to waive design, planning and zoning regulations for approving the siting of emergency shelters.
  - Shelters would have to comply with applicable building codes, have adequate transportation access and not pose any identifiable public health or safety concern.
  - Shelters could be sited outside an urban growth boundary in areas zoned rural residential.
  - Shelters could not be sited on land designated as natural disaster/hazard (e.g., flood plains) or in places where there is an environmental hazard.
  - The operator of the shelter is either a local government, organization with two years of experience operating emergency shelter using best practices (including

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[1] https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/ISD/RA/Oregon-Statewide-Shelter-Study.pdf

nonprofits, housing authorities, religious/public benefit corporations) or nonprofits who can partner with the above entities.

- o This siting authority expires July 1, 2021, but the shelter can remain after the sunset. Should the shelter cease to operate, the normal land use regulations would apply again.

- Transitional Housing: Gives local governments more flexibility in siting transitional housing, specifically more authority regarding use of parking lots.

- Funding: Appropriates $45 million in one-time General Fund, specifically:
  - o $26.5 million in grants for increasing low-barrier shelter capacity, providing necessary facilities/amenities (e.g., restroom and hygiene facilities) and rapid rehousing services;
  - o $16.5 million for navigation centers to be operational by November 30, 2020, in Bend, Eugene, McMinnville, Medford and Salem; and
  - o $2 million to OHCS to develop and provide technical assistance.

I want to thank the many advocates who have provided constructive feedback as this bill concept has developed. I want to emphasize that I view this as a partnership with local governments. Cities and counties across the state have expressed the desire for this bill and additional funding to help their communities experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and I greatly appreciate that support.

Too many cities and towns have had difficulty establishing locations for low-barrier shelters that can save lives. We need to reduce barriers that are keeping people from getting shelter. We all share the same goal: working together to help individuals and families experiencing homelessness have shelter and safety.

This is just one part of a multifaceted approach to address the housing crisis in our state. This bill will not solve every problem, but it is a near-term solution that I hope we can all support.

Thank you for the time and I'm happy to take your questions.