



February 21, 2020

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Smith Warner, and Members of the House Committee on Rules,

My name is Michael DeSantis and I serve as a Public Policy Associate for Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO). Through a membership of 15 denominations and over 150 congregations, organizations, and interfaith partners, EMO serves hundreds-of-thousands of diverse members of the faith community all across Oregon.

EMO supports HB 4001, which will expand Oregon's network of low-barrier shelters and other support services for Oregonians experiencing homelessness. Our support for expanding Oregon's network of homelessness services stems not only from our member's shared commitment to justice, but also our experience operating 5 housing-related programs for marginalized communities.

Through these programs, EMO helps to house Oregonians from many of these same communities who will receive assistance through HB 4001. This includes services to houseless youth through our Second Home program; housing support to survivors of domestic violence who are clients at our Russian Oregon Social Services program, affordable housing to low-income residents through Metro HomeShare and at our North Portland housing complex, and housing to recently arrived refugees starting new lives through our SOAR Refugee Resettlement program.

We have also worked with Representatives Alisa Keny-Guyer and Cheri Helt, the House Committee on Human Services and Housing, and the Speaker's Office to promote HB 4039, another bill in the Speaker's housing package that will greatly expand access to shelter, housing, and support services for unaccompanied houseless youth.

HB 4001 will provide short-term rental assistance for houseless families transitioning to permanent housing. One 2016 study found that 47 percent of unaccompanied houseless youth first experience homelessness with their families.<sup>1</sup> By keeping youth in stable housing with their families, HB 4001 will prevent youth homelessness and help to reduce the number of unaccompanied houseless youth.

Additionally, HB 4001 will help divert houseless youth away from a lifetime of housing instability. A 2014 University of Southern California report found that up to 50 percent of chronically homeless adults were homeless as older transition-aged youth.<sup>2</sup> By directing funds to both transitional housing for families with school-aged children and youth shelters, the legislation before you today will not only help address the unsheltered homelessness crisis of today but also prevent the unsheltered homelessness crisis of tomorrow.

It is on behalf of these youth, the clients in our other housing-related programs, and in embrace of our responsibility for one another that we thank this Committee for considering the Speaker's request for far more robust funding of these programs that will address Oregon's houselessness crisis. EMO would also like to thank Speaker Kotek for her leadership in addressing Oregon's crisis of houselessness and for including much needed funding for youth shelters in HB 4001.

Thank you,

Michael DeSantis  
Public Policy Associate  
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americaspromise.org/report/hidden-plain-sight>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/cms/docs/WorkingTogetherHomeless.pdf>