

March 2, 2021

House Committee on Housing
Representative Julie Fahey, Chair
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Fahey and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2100 with the -1 amendment. The City of Gresham supports state financial resources to help address homelessness. The City recognizes and acknowledges the impacts of policy and budget decisions that lead to inequitable outcomes, and is actively engaged in evaluating and challenging its own practices. The City supports state legislation and budget investments that eliminate racial disparities with transparency and accountability.

HB 2100 is a significant piece of legislation that will modernize the statewide homeless services system. In particular, the legislation advances racial equity in homeless services programs and endeavors to make the system more inclusive. The City appreciates the focus on a data-driven and outcomes-oriented approach to addressing this important issue. The bill creates performance expectations for culturally responsive services and codifies performance standards for Community Action Agencies to engage culturally specific service providers in their planning. It also opens pathways for culturally specific service providers to advise OHCS on homeless service programs.

Gresham appreciates that HB 2100 addresses the necessity of centering equity and racial justice in the system through targeted resources to the BIPOC community. We understand the racial disparities that exist for those experiencing poverty and houselessness: a 2019 study by the Oregon Community Foundation found that Black and Indigenous Oregonians represent a share of the homeless population that is more than three times higher than these groups' representation in the general population. We see these racial disparities in Gresham, where the poverty rate for African Americans is almost double the rate of the City as a whole, and 20% of all residents and 40% of African American families have received food assistance in the last 12 months.

We appreciate the significant increase in state funding to address housing and homelessness over the last few years, but the number of people experiencing homelessness in Oregon has also increased significantly over the same time period. The City of Gresham values the work of Multnomah County and Community Action Agencies across the state to provide vital homeless services, and we do not believe that the strategies in HB 2100 should come at the expense of Oregon's CAAs. However, we appreciate the bill's efforts to modernize our state's approach to homelessness via improved coordination that incorporates local control and collaboration. We also urge the state to consider consistent, formula-based funding that incorporates population size, as well as a racial equity lens, to ensure funding can make the biggest impact to address racial disparities.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Brian Monberg
Government Affairs Manager