

My Name is Ronald Verini and as Chairman of Veteran Advocates of Ore-Ida we are opposed to this HB2100 and these are the points I wish to make regarding this.

Disinvestment in Local Communities: This proposal will lead to a 20% reduction in existing local services and will divert any future funding for EHA/SHAP services away from local networks. We currently serve a high number of customers who have disabilities, customers who have been underrepresented, the elderly and the homeless. This proposal will put all of these populations at risk of losing local services.

Long-Term Planning: A decline in financial commitment in rural areas will ensure more challenges to long-term investments. This will negatively affect our ability to expand infrastructure, which is critical to addressing the homeless crisis. This will negatively affect our ability to leverage additional federal funds that require matching state or flexible funding. We are seeing the loss right now as projects cannot move forward not knowing if they can be funded in the future.

Local Partnerships at Risk: This bill puts local partnerships at risk throughout our local communities. As one of the smallest agencies in the state, Community in Action partners with dozens of local entities that include faith based, non-profit, veteran organizations, school districts, domestic violence shelters, day shelters and meal sites in two counties. Innovative partnerships are taking place in rural communities and creating a competitive statewide process for accessing funding is another way that will disinvest in rural communities. Salem should not be making decisions for rural Oregon and local leaders do not want that.

Failure to Consult with Community Action Agency Network: Oregon Housing & Community Services failed to consult with the network that provides services to the homeless. The network was informed on December 28, 2020 of their intent to disinvest in homeless services currently being provided by the network. This behind the scenes design and decision making is difficult to understand. Oregon Housing & Community Services continues to drive toward a pre-determined outcome unwilling to make meaningful changes. We deserve better and the homeless customers we serve deserve better.

OHCS Capacity: This is a challenging time for all Oregonians. Homeless services customers and those who are trying desperately to hold onto the housing they currently have are in danger. The eviction moratorium is set to expire and these customers are going to be placed in a worse situation than they are in today. Instead of Oregon Housing & Community Services trying to design a different network for services, they should be working as a partner with the current network that has successfully invested millions of dollars into homeless services to help local customers meet their housing and other immediate needs.

HB2100 Will Lead to Funding Delays: In August of 2020, the CAA Network reached a one-time compromise with Oregon Housing & Community Services regarding the distribution of Emergency Solutions Grant funds. This fund was split by investing in the CAA Network in the amount of \$7M and leaving \$43M for Oregon Housing & Community Services to invest through an RFP process. The goal was to increase capacity to get emergency rental assistance out during the pandemic. The CAA Network invested \$7million into the homeless services systems quickly and responsibly. To date, Oregon Housing & Community Services has invested \$0 of the \$43million available, it is still tied up in their bureaucratic processes while Oregonians are suffering.

Ronald Verini
Chairman Veteran Advocates of Ore-Ida