



Mid-Columbia Community Action Council
Serving Hood River, Wasco and Sherman Counties
312 E. 4th St.
The Dalles, OR 97058

Chair Jama and Members of the Senate Housing Committee,

My name is Kenny LaPoint and I am the Executive Director of Mid-Columbia Community Action Council (MCCAC) serving Hood River, Wasco and Sherman Counties. I am here today providing testimony in support of House Bill 2006.

In 2020, MCCAC served over 5,200 members of the Mid-Columbia community and 33% of those served are BIPOC or from the Latino/a community. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, MCCAC has ramped up its programs and partnerships to ensure that our most vulnerable friends and neighbors had access to non-congregate emergency shelter, energy assistance, weatherization, homeless assistance and homeless prevention resources. MCCAC has worked tirelessly over the past year to stand up non-congregate shelters in order to meet the needs of our houseless friends and neighbors while working to fill the statewide shelter gap of 5,800 shelter beds as identified in OHCS' 2019 Statewide Shelter Study. This work has required strong partnership building, intense advocacy, site identification and sustainable funding.

The work to stand up our existing shelters has not been easy and much work remains to be done. In fact, we are working with Hood River Shelter Services to identify a location for the 2021-2022 winter shelter season. This will be no easy feat and House Bill 2006 will likely play a critical role in siting the shelter once a location is found. Without the passage of House Bill 2006, the Hood River shelter that our houseless community members rely on to stay safe during the cold winter months, will not be able to operate.

The MCCAC shelter site in The Dalles was unfortunately unable to take advantage of prior shelter siting flexibility from House Bill 4212 in the June 2020 Special Session. The site was not identified and agreed upon in the time window of HB 4212. The city of The Dalles instead utilized a cold weather based emergency declaration to allow for the siting during the winter of 2020-2021. Interestingly, as we approached the end of the winter season, the city began a discussion on allowing the shelter to operate year round. This was largely in part due to the success that the shelter has been able to demonstrate including strong outcomes for shelter guests and decreased utilization of city funded emergency

services. However, siting concerns arose at this point and due to the fact that the site was not allowed utilizing HB 4212, we found ourselves stuck. An emergency declaration based on winter weather was no longer feasible, siting flexibility was not in place and the city of The Dalles does not have existing zoning to allow for shelter. At this point HB 2006 became our main hope. Recognizing that HB 2006 had work to be done, we planned to shut down our shelter on March 31, 2021. This was discussed at The Dalles City Council meeting on March 22, 2021. At the last minute, The Dalles city staff were able to find a previously unknown flexibility based on where the shelter site is located. As city right of way property we found that the site was not subject to local land use laws and the city immediately approved the operation of the shelter for the remainder of 2021.

While the end result for The Dalles shelter site was a good one, we very easily could have been in a situation where HB 2006 was our only hope. And, as stated, the Hood River shelter will need the flexibility of HB 2006 for the 2021-2022 shelter season. Having shelter options in both Hood River and The Dalles, our region's largest population centers, is very important to our most vulnerable community members. With that, I encourage your support of House Bill 2006.

In service to community,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kenny LaPoint', written over a thin horizontal line.

Kenny LaPoint, Executive Director