



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2006A
Senate Committee on Housing and Development

Speaker of the House Tina Kotek
April 15, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2006A. This bill aims to increase access to the emergency shelter that is needed to assist Oregonians who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

A version of this bill can be found as House Bill 4001C in the 2020 Regular Session, a bill that was ultimately not passed because the session ended abruptly. Additionally, a time-limited version of the shelter siting provisions was included in House Bill 4212 in the 2020 1st Special Session.

The most recent point-in-time (PIT) count from 2019 found that more than half (61 percent) of the nearly 16,000 people experiencing homelessness in Oregon were living in unsheltered locations. That was an estimated 10,000 individuals sleeping outside on any given night. This was the situation *before* the greatest public health crisis of our lifetime. The COVID-19 pandemic has only magnified this crisis, and we will not have an accurate picture of the true extent of the disaster until the next PIT count, whenever that will be.

I am hopeful that the eviction moratorium extension we passed last December, coupled with infusions of significant state and federal resources for emergency rent assistance, will go far to keep Oregonians housed during the pandemic and beyond. But I urge us to maintain our emergency mindset to take on our state's emergency shelter shortage. We are still months away from a return to normal, and our unsheltered neighbors will continue to face enormous risks from the virus.

House Bill 2006A does the following related to emergency shelters (Sections 2 through 4):

- 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 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 must be either a local government, an organization with two years of experience operating emergency shelter using best practices, or a nonprofit who can partner with the above entities;
- The siting authority expires July 1, 2022, but the shelter may remain open after the sunset; and
- Should the shelter cease to operate, the normal land use regulations would apply again.

With regard to transitional housing and overnight camping, the bill clarifies and expands existing authority available to local governments (Sections 5 and 6).

The bill also provides authorizing language for Oregon Housing and Community Services to fund technical assistance, shelter services, and navigation centers (Sections 7 through 11).

I believe that dramatic measures are necessary to meet the moment. Our unsheltered homelessness crisis has only deepened, and so must our resolve to address it. This bill passed the House floor with a strong bipartisan vote, 54-4-2.

Thank you for the time and your consideration.