

Dear Chair Evans, Vice-Chair Lewis, Vice-Chair Meek, and Members of the Committee:

As a retired Air Force officer with Vietnam-era combat duty, former Chair of the Oregon Housing Stability Council and former member of the Oregon Veterans Advisory Committee, I have committed my life to assisting the housing security needs of Oregon's most vulnerable citizens. Today, these critical needs pertain especially to all our homeless veterans who have served our country and are deemed eligible for benefits by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

As you well know, our nation and state are experiencing at least three major challenges – the COVID-19 pandemic, an economic crisis, and a mental health crisis. This combination of dire events has caused many Oregonians to lose their jobs, experience depression and mental health challenges, and become homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

While one in fourteen Oregonians is a veteran, it is sad that one in ten Oregonians (10%) experiencing homelessness has served in the military. This is even more traumatic for our over-represented and underserved communities such as our Women Veterans – who represent up to 9% of veterans experiencing homelessness.

I know this Committee has “stood tall” in the past and agreed that no man or woman who served their country should be without a safe and stable place to rest his or her head – yet it is estimated that there are still over 1,300 homeless veterans in Oregon on any given night, and many more who are at risk of homelessness due to poverty, lack of support networks and dismal living conditions.

Today you have an opportunity to create new hope backed by resources to our Veterans. I am convinced that HB 2094 will allow OHCS to serve all veterans deemed eligible by the federal VA while providing critical flexibility to the effective outreach of our overtaxed service providers. I support HB 2094 and respectfully request Your Committee to approve this bill.

Respectfully,

“Val” Valfre

PO Box 807

Forest Grove, OR 97116

(503) 849-2663

