



TINA KOTEK
GOVERNOR

Testimony before the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
Tina Kotek, Governor of Oregon
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Chair Dexter, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the -3 amendment to House Bill 5019. And thank you for your incredible commitment to helping Oregonians experiencing homelessness.

I am here specifically to speak in support of Sections 1-12 and 19-20, which are in response to my call for an early investment package to address unsheltered homelessness. I understand that other sections reflect additional priorities for legislators, and while I welcome that conversation, I also want to be clear up front that I have not reviewed the rest of this amendment, so my comments are focused on the specific sections previously mentioned.

Let's start with the big picture – we are here today because the human suffering caused by the housing crisis is one of the most daunting emergencies we have ever faced in Oregon. Business as usual is simply not enough. We must work together, across all levels of government, and across party lines, to make the immediate and long-term changes that this humanitarian crisis requires.

On my first full day in office, I declared a homelessness state of emergency. Since then, I have set an aggressive timeline and proposed specific, outcomes-driven investments that are aimed at reducing unsheltered homelessness by the end of this year.

First, I want to share more context about how my team is operationalizing the homelessness state of emergency, and then I will outline the investments in the bill before you today.

On January 10, I declared a state of emergency in regions of the state that have experienced an increase in unsheltered homelessness of 50% or more from 2017 to 2022. I directed the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (ODEM) and our state housing agency (OHCS) to support the establishment of multi-agency coordinating groups in emergency areas that will serve as the core infrastructure of the emergency response, also known as “MAC groups.” The local MAC groups will include:

- Homelessness and emergency management staff from local jurisdictions
- Public housing authorities
- Local homelessness agencies
- Rapid rehousing service providers
- Shelter developer/operators
- Landlord associations
- Behavioral health providers

These MAC groups will provide the planning, coordination, and operational leadership that will bring real, measurable improvements on the ground. They will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of funds, working with both landlords and unsheltered people in their communities to help move individuals and families into housing stability.

Ultimately, I am directing the MAC groups, OHCS, and OEM to develop plans and administer funds in order to achieve the following goals by Jan. 10, 2024:

- Prevent 8,750 households from becoming homeless statewide;
- Add 600 low-barrier shelter beds in emergency areas; and
- Rehouse at least 1,200 unsheltered households in emergency areas.

We will only be able to meet these targets with the legislature's urgent support in approving a targeted investment early in this session. As you know, I initially proposed \$130 million to support the emergency response.

After many constructive conversations with legislative leadership, the package before you today now totals \$155 million and will reduce unsheltered homelessness, expand shelter capacity, and prevent homelessness in every corner of the state.

Specific investments include:

- \$33.6 million to prevent homelessness statewide
- \$85.2 million to rehouse people experiencing homelessness and expand shelter capacity in emergency areas
- \$27.4 million to rehouse people experiencing homelessness and expand shelter capacity in the 26 rural counties that make up the Balance of State Continuum of Care.
- \$5 million to federally recognized Tribes to address homelessness needs among tribal members statewide
- \$3.9 million for emergency management response (OHCS and ODEM)

This approach will provide additional investments for communities in every corner of Oregon, while also allowing our limited emergency management infrastructure to focus on delivering targeted results in areas with the highest increases in unsheltered homelessness.

But we must not stop here.

I'm urging you to make this investment now and then build upon it in the 2023-25 biennium. My recommended budget urges you to make significant, additional investments to rehouse and prevent homelessness for more Oregonians, build and preserve more housing units statewide, and increase homeownership.

It will take strategic investments, clearly targeted outcomes, and disciplined implementation at all levels of government to make the progress Oregonians are demanding.

We can and must rise to meet the moment. Thank you.