

**DEB PATTERSON
STATE SENATOR/SENADORA ESTATAL
DISTRICT/DISTRITO 10**



OREGON STATE SENATE/SENADO DEL ESTADO DE OREGON

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Deb Patterson, State Senator from District 10. I am here to add my support to SB 496.

SB 496 would create a pet assistance and support program to provide funding to qualified homeless and domestic violence shelters to reduce barriers for those individuals' experiencing homelessness with their pets. It would not be a requirement that such shelters offer this program, but it would provide resources for this program should the shelter wish to offer it to support those they serve.

Oregon's homeless population is at a crisis level, ranking 7th in the country with the most individuals experiencing homelessness on any given night. On top of this, wildfires, flooding, COVID-19 and spikes in domestic violence have led to many fleeing their homes in search of shelters. Many of these Oregonians have a pet with them and unfortunately, the majority of shelters are not able to accommodate pets, forcing individuals to choose between their own safety and having to surrender their pet. Pets not only offer companionship and safety, but they also provide responsibility and a routine but, according to the Oregon Statewide Shelter Study (2019), the inability to shelter with a pet or service animal ranks among the top 10 barriers to shelter. For many, this barrier is insurmountable and results in people refusing housing, choosing instead to remain outside or in a dangerous living situation with their pet rather than surrendering them.

By making accommodations for pets, we can bring in more individuals to shelters who would otherwise not receive services and shelters. This program would provide funds including shelter, pet food and supplies, and basic veterinary services, along with staffing and liability insurance related to providing those services.

I urge your support of SB 496 as we, as a state, move toward dismantling the barriers that individuals are facing to receiving services and shelter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deb Patterson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deb Patterson