



January 30, 2023

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Emerson Hamlin, and I am a political organizer for the Oregon Nurses Association. We represent 15,000 nurses, including RNs, advanced practice nurses, and allied health workers.

We strongly urge you to swiftly pass SB 799 as part of the Homelessness Prevention Package. Our members consistently see the detrimental impacts of homelessness on patients' health. The National Health Care for the Homeless Council has long found that homelessness creates new health problems and exacerbates existing ones: between high levels of stress, little ability to access nutritious food, no safe place to store medications, and inconsistent access to clean running water, it is easy for minor issues like cuts or colds to escalate into major health problems<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, people without housing experience higher rates of hypertension, asthma, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS than their housed peers.<sup>2</sup> In total, people experiencing homelessness have higher rates of illness and die an average of twelve years sooner than the average US population.<sup>3</sup> If we want healthy communities, we must do all we can to keep people housed.

Additionally, this is an issue that directly impacts our own members: although our nurses have well-paying jobs, many are renters, and are facing the same exorbitant rent increases as other Oregonians, ranging from 15%, to as high as 50% this year. Our members often live in the same communities that they work in and are doubly committed to their service because their patients are also their neighbors. It's important that they can continue to live and serve in the communities they call home.

Passing SB 799 is not only critical to keep people housed, but to protect the health our communities across Oregon. ONA urges a yes vote. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Emerson Hamlin

Political Organizer at Oregon Nurses Association

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<sup>1</sup> National Health Care for the Homeless Council, 2019. *Homelessness & Health: What's the Connection?* [Fact Sheet].

<sup>2</sup> Zlotnick & Zerger, 2008

<sup>3</sup> National Health Care for the Homeless Council, 2019. *Homelessness & Health: What's the Connection?* [Fact Sheet].