

March 2, 2023

Joint Subcommittee on Transportation & Economic Development
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: SB 5511, Appropriates moneys from General Fund to OHCS for biennial expenses
Testimony for Public Hearing on March 2, 2023

Dear Co-Chair Woods, Co-Chair Gomberg, Members of the Committee,

The City of Sodaville respectfully requests your support of SB 5511 be contingent upon the Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) Department's budget being required to directly, and annually, provide funding to each city in Oregon to address and prevent homelessness.

Oregon's homelessness crisis is unprecedented. If this humanitarian disaster is to be rapidly and proportionally addressed, the state must reconsider how funds are implemented and how resources can be directed to reach all Oregonians. The current system of competitive grants and new reliance on continuums of care is fragmented, inequitable, and ignores the front-line response work happening on the ground in cities today. When faced with a crisis of this magnitude, it is critical that the State support the work being done day-in-and-out, on the ground in cities. A direct and collaborative partnership between the state and its 241 cities is critical to Oregon's response.

Every corner of this state, every city in this state, has a resident who is either experiencing homelessness or is so unstably housed they are one emergency away from losing their home. The OHCS budget should reflect this painful reality and ensure that cities are provided direct funding to quickly deploy resources, in coordination with county and provider partners, to make meaningful advancements not just in addressing homelessness, but in preventing it as well.

The homeless crisis is not impacting Sodaville yet, but rising inflation and cost of living increases will leave many residents without a place to go if they lose their home. Sodaville needs funding to support residents who are in danger of losing their homes, and prevention funding will allow us to support our citizens.

Providing each city direct funding ensures two things. First, it allows for a more rapid deployment of solutions to address and prevent homelessness. Second, it ensures state resources are reaching Oregonians in all communities. Annual funding enables cities, in partnership with counties and providers, to effectively plan their community response, commit to specific outcomes, and clearly measure and communicate on local progress towards those outcomes. One-and-done funding is just not effective or realistic.

Cities are frontline workers in our state's homelessness crisis. As frontline workers, cities know where resources are lacking and where and how programs can be launched to provide the most efficient and direct impact to the Oregonians who are not being reached under the current approach of competitive grants and indirect funding.

The city of Sodaville strongly encourages the Joint Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development to pass SB 5511, with an amendment that directly, and annually, allocates funding from OHCS to each city in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Mayor Brian Lewis
City of Sodaville

Sodaville



Sodaville is a small community of less than 400 residents. At this time, Sodaville is not experiencing a homelessness crisis, and city staff is not presently aware of any resident who has articulated a concern about being unstably housed. That said, census data suggests that at least 10% of the city's residents live in poverty. With poverty being one of the root causes of homelessness, the city is mindful that issues may be brewing under the surface.

OUR WORK:

With no visible homelessness issue, and an extreme lack of fiscal and personnel resources available to it, the city of Sodaville has taken no real steps towards preventing or responding to homelessness. Taking steps, even small ones, requires funding the city presently does not have, or funding the city can't readily acquire without state assistance. At a minimum, the city wishes it could provide its residents who suffer from food scarcity with hot and nutritious meals, and take steps to prevent housing insecurity for those members who are at or below the poverty line.

STATE FUNDING NEEDED:

Sodaville requires sustained, state funding to prevent its impoverished residents from falling into homelessness. The city of Sodaville cannot adequately prevent a resident from becoming unhoused, its budget simply does not provide enough resources to be of any real assistance. For the most current fiscal year, Sodaville budgeted just over \$400,000 in revenue, with nearly every dollar being allocated to maintain basic city services. Statewide funding will help Sodaville provide needed services and save public resources.

OUR PLAN:

Under the OMA Taskforces proposal, Sodaville will receive \$50,000 in annual direct funding from the state. These funds will be revolutionary for a city the size of Sodaville. The city will use these funds, in collaboration with trusted partners like Community Services Consortium and local churches, to develop targeted prevention practices, including the creation of a food bank and programs to assist those experiencing housing insecurity.

CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION REQUEST:

The city of Sodaville is requesting a separate capital allocation of \$1 Million to rehabilitate a vacant building located in the city's downtown core so that it may be used to provide social services to residents of Sodaville, and serve as both a warming and cooling station. The most recent point in time county suggests that, at a minimum, Linn County has over 300 persons living unhoused. Linn County only has three warming stations, combined they cannot properly provide a safe space from the elements for all those experiencing homelessness. With the capital construction funds requested herein, Sodaville can rehabilitate its vacant building so that it can serve as a cooling and warming station, provide internet access to those in need, and house a food bank.

