



Mid-Columbia Community Action Council
Serving Hood River, Wasco, and Sherman Counties
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Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Kelli Horvath, and I am the Director of the Office of Housing Stabilization at Mid-Columbia Community Action Council in Wasco County. I would like to express my support—and ask for your support—of Senate Bill 600.

Mid-Columbia Community Action Council is the lead houseless services provider in Wasco, Sherman, and Hood River Counties, and one of the handful of pilot communities across Oregon that received funding from House Bill 4123 to strengthen our region's coordinated houselessness prevention and response system. We are also the local administrator of the Oregon Eviction Diversion and Prevention Program (ORE-DAP), which provides critical rent assistance, and in some cases legal assistance, to low-income households facing eviction.

Six Rivers Dispute Resolution Center is one of our organization's key service partners. Our housing caseworkers regularly coordinate with Six Rivers to support clients who are facing eviction to access mediation services. In most cases, clients facing eviction express to us that these services are preferable even over the legal assistance we can help them access free of charge with our funding from the ORE-DAP program. In a small, rural community, our clients facing eviction often have a personal relationship with the mom-and-pop landlords who own their rental units, so mediation is a more friendly approach to bringing in a third party who can help ensure a good outcome for the tenant. In other cases, our clients express that they have had negative or no experience with the legal system, and that the idea of bringing in a lawyer feels too intimidating and risky when they are at risk of losing their housing. Mediation is an approach that feels more comfortable though.

The work Six Rivers does to help our clients effectively navigate conflict in an affordable, accessible fashion is a key component of the efforts happening in our region to prevent and end houselessness. Six Rivers receives critical funding, in part, through the Oregon Office of Community Dispute Resolution at the University of Oregon. Ensuring adequate funding for these critical Centers will help us continue to partner with Six Rivers as the only accessible provider of core mediation and training services that many of our community's unstably housed families rely on to keep a roof over their head. Once again, I urge you to support SB 600 so that we can accomplish that goal.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kelli Horvath

Director of the Office of Housing Stabilization

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