

Testimony in support of HB 3440
March 27, 2023

To: Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Owens and Hartman, and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
From: Ray Miao, Board Member, Deschutes Public Library District and Deschutes County Rural Fire Protection District #2

My wife and I have lived in Deschutes County for 33 years. We have seen the tremendous increase in homelessness here. HB 3440 is a great step forward toward addressing this issue. HB 3440 makes funds available for housing placement/rehousing services, rental assistance, and development of new low income housing for youth and families with children in Deschutes County.

I have, as an elected Rural Fire District Board member, seen increasing demands on our fire service from both fire and emergency medical calls. Providing shelter for homeless people camping in the wildland-urban interface means less risk of wildfires and less difficult emergency transports. It would also reduce the risks of camping trailer fires and emergency medical calls within the City of Bend. HB 3440 would reduce the number of these incidences. This would allow fire personnel to respond more quickly and effectively to other fire and medical calls resulting in more lives saved and less property lost. It would also reduce the risks of injury and exposure to toxic fumes for our fire fighters.

I have been elected to serve on the Library board for nearly 25 years. Libraries are welcoming places for everyone including the homeless. I take pride that our buildings provide some shelter from inclement weather and fire smoke. However, this also creates difficulties within the library not only for patrons but also library staff. We work with other organizations to address the homelessness issue on a community-wide basis. HB 3440 is a definite step forward to addressing the communities as well as the libraries concerns. Libraries are here to help build community and HB 3440 goes a long way toward that goal.

I cannot speak for the District Boards on which I serve but I will certainly advocate for the option to use tax foreclosed property receipts as provided for by HB 3440.

I strongly urge you to pass HB 3440 and help us to build more livable communities for everyone. Feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss the benefits of HB 3440 in more detail.

Respectfully,
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