



HOUSING SENIORS | CREATING HOPE | PILOTING CHANGE

March 27, 2023

Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for SB 1076

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to express strong support for SB 1076 on behalf of Northwest Pilot Project, and as a member and workgroup co-chair of the Oregon Housing Alliance.

Northwest Pilot Project provides housing stabilization and case management services to people aged 55 and older experiencing housing instability and homelessness in Multnomah County. We work to end homelessness for very low income seniors, who are among the fastest growing segment of the population experiencing homelessness.

As a provider focusing on older adults, the topic of hospital discharge plans arises frequently. Our team is all too familiar with the tremendous obstacles unhoused people face when navigating our medical system, and how vulnerable the moments after treatment or being seen in the hospital can be for someone who has no place to go. Researchers have documented an alarming increase in senior homelessness in recent years,¹ documenting that the population experiencing homelessness continues to grow older and more medically vulnerable.

SB 1076 is a reminder that homelessness is not only a matter of housing, but also of health. For too many people, the housing affordability crisis combines with a deeply fragmented, inaccessible healthcare system to create scenarios that defy the most basic principles of safety and care for people with medical needs. Providers like NWPP continue to see vulnerable unhoused people discharged to the streets without a plan,

¹ The Emerging Crisis of Aged Homelessness (2019), Dennis Culhane, PhD et al. <https://www.aisp.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Emerging-Crisis-of-Aged-Homelessness-1.pdf>

and we know this results in severely negative outcomes, including death. Further, the most recent data shows disproportionate mortality rates among Black and Indigenous Oregonians experiencing homelessness,² a clear sign that the guardrails within SB 1076 should be considered within our larger strategy to address racial disparities across the state.

Preventing such tragic and unjust outcomes is a complex challenge, but SB 1076 is the right step towards aligning our systems to work better for people who need care the most. This bill promotes a commonsense approach to ensure that patients have safer locations to go to and are provided with more appropriate help to make it to their next destination.

We strongly urge you to support SB 1076, which will advance efforts in Oregon to reduce homelessness and promote safer, healthier communities.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

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Oregon Housing Alliance

² Preliminary Domicile Unknown Deaths (Accessed March 2023), Oregon Health Authority Center for Health Statistics.

https://visual-data.dhsoha.state.or.us/t/OHA/views/Oregonpreliminarydomicileunknowndeaths/Dashboard?%3Adisplay_count=n&%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aorigin=viz_share_link&%3AshowAppBanner=false&%3AshowVizHome=n