



28 March 2023

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development:

My name is Jimmy Jones, and I am the Executive Director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency in Salem. We serve low-income residents of Marion, Polk and nine other counties across Oregon. Annually we provide more than \$70 million in services and direct client assistance for housing, homelessness, energy and weatherization, and early learning programs to more than 55,000 Oregonians in poverty, in addition to a range of emergency services that shelter the homeless and serve wildfire victims. I also serve as the Vice President for Legislative Affairs at the Community Action Partnership of Oregon, and sit on the Housing Committee of the Racial Justice Council and the House Bill 2100 Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities. And for many years, I have been an advocate for the homeless residents of our state.

On behalf of MWVCAA and the Community Action Partnership of Oregon (CAPO), I write in support of the -2 amendments to Senate Bill 918. The -2 Amendments build on currently existing homeless service programs, ones that will be unfunded without the supports outlined in Senate Bill 918-2. They also create a specific and dedicated stream of funding for culturally specific and culturally responsive organizations with an initial investment of \$25 million. These programs in particular will protect currently served clients of the Urban League and the Oregon Worker Relief Coalition.

This bill would also increase funding for the Emergency Housing Account (EHA) and the State Homeless Assistance Program (SHAP) by an additional \$9.5 million over the current service level. These grants are critical to the state-wide Community Action network, because they are the primary capacity and sheltering grants used across Oregon by our local community based organizations. These grants are also frequently passed through to other local nonprofits, so that they too can run housing and sheltering programs. Critically, these program funds have not increased since the pandemic began, and currently the Community Action network in 2023 is operating on a 2019 level of funding. Without an increase this session, that 2019 level of funding will remain static until 2025. EHA and SHAP are vital funding streams for rural Oregon, and are distributed in a way that ensures geographic equity. EHA in particular is the single most valuable state homeless grant. Its flexible use supports other grant work like HUD grants, which require a 25 percent match.

We ask your support for Senate Bill 918-2, which will fund critical and on-going work for culturally specific organizations, and provide additional resources for the state's Community Action network, in its anti-poverty and homeless efforts. We are proud to stand with our partners in this effort. We are committed to being part of the broader statewide solution to Oregon's homeless and housing crisis, and a partner to other nonprofits in their vital work in our communities.

Respectfully,

Jimmy Jones
Executive Director