



7 February 2024

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care:

My name is Jimmy Jones, and I am the Executive Director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency in Salem, Oregon. 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. I also Chair the Joint Task Force on Hospital Discharge. And for many years, I have been an advocate for the homeless residents of our state.

On behalf of our Agency and those in poverty, and especially the 20,000 known literally homeless citizens of Oregon, I write to urge your support for SB 1507-3, which will provide additional critical resources to the Office of the Public Guardian. Our conversations at the Joint Task Force on Hospital Discharge are still in a formulative stage. We do not have any specific policy recommendations, but there is a general consensus that parts of our post-acute care system are broken, and those elements that are working need to be working better.

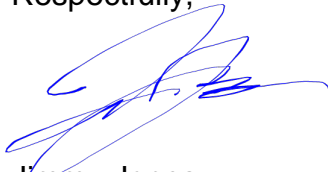
Here at MWVCAA, our housing and homeless programs served 20,679 *unique* adult homeless and housing unstable clients in 2023, and 108 *unique* unaccompanied runaway and homeless youth (ages 11-17) in Marion and Polk. We operate six homeless shelters, including four adult shelters (ARCHES Inn, ARCHES Lodge, Tanner Project, and the Community Action Navigation Center), and two youth RHY shelters (Taylor's House and David's House), in addition to our high use ARCHES day center and several supportive housing projects. Annually we work with 1,200 high needs, unsheltered homeless clients.

A growing number of these long-term, chronically homeless unsheltered clients are in desperate need of expanded guardianship services. SB 1507-3 will provide an additional \$904,102 to the Office of the Public Guardian and Conservator. These funds will allow for the addition of four additional deputies in the Office, and one supervisor. These additions will not fully cover the unmet need in Oregon, but it will dramatically increase capacity for the Office. These additional positions will help address the gap in needed service capacity for our growing numbers of unsheltered homeless, and they will provide more support for better linkages between our hospitals and the overtaxed post-acute care entities in Oregon. The new resources are important, but we do hope that future legislation will also thoughtfully and with care expand authority for the Office of Public Guardian, to address some of the wild outrages against human dignity that we

see on our streets, with people dying needless, slow and painful deaths simply because they do not have the state-level supports necessary to protect them.

Our homeless crisis is exceptionally complex, enveloping not only the needs for more housing production, especially affordable housing, but also expanded access and supports for behavioral health and substance abuse treatment. Our hospitals in Oregon have become the front lines on a growing public health crisis centered on unsheltered homelessness, drug addiction, and behavioral health concerns. We simply must do better, understand how systems relate and respond to one another, and align the resources we have in smarter, more effective ways. SB 1507-03 will not solve all these problems, but it does take an important first step in providing needed assistance to vulnerable people living, and dying, under the stars in Oregon.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jimmy Jones', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Jimmy Jones
Executive Director