



February 12, 2024

Oregon Senate Interim Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE, Salem, OR 97301
Submitted via electronic mail

Honorable Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

Subject: Support for Senate Bill 1530 (SB 1530)

We are writing as Board of Directors (Board) of the Coordinated Houseless Response Office (CHRO, House Bill 4123) - representing Deschutes County and the Cities of Bend, Redmond, Sisters and La Pine – **to urge for sustainable funding for our emergency shelters (shelters) that have recently opened and have become essential places of refuge for our very large houseless population.**

We need shelters that can support the full range of needs for individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Deschutes County and we need funding that can go where it can be most impactful and rapidly implemented whether this means deploying funding directly to a City, to a service provider, or to a Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) group. Each shelter in each city is different and their funding mechanisms and operational structures are unique. Funding flexibility ensures the highest impact, as people experiencing homelessness in Central Oregon have varying needs, and we know a one-size-fits-all approach will not solve this crisis. Rather, we need funding that will **allow for a range of options like case management, behavioral health, basic needs, housing navigation, etc.** Adding beds is one measure of success but so is increasing case management frequency and enhancing landlord navigation so that we get the people experiencing homelessness in our community into a stable environment.

Just as we know that there is a housing continuum and that we need housing of all types to meet the needs of our communities; **we also know that we need to create a variety of shelter types for the people experiencing houselessness in our community.** This is why the CHRO Board is opening a regional Request for Proposal (RFP) that will connect service providers with publicly owned land. This RFP asks service providers to tell us what type of outdoor shelter is needed in our community and how it could match with the sites we have identified. We are all pooling resources like money, land, and staff resources because we know that this is what our community needs. **We can't move forward with new shelters if we can't be certain that our existing shelters can stay open.**



Our Board has come together to work as a region on solutions and public engagement, knowing that houselessness looks different in each of our communities. We often do not agree on strategies or the causes of houselessness, but we agree that shelter is an essential part of our community’s homeless response system. **We want to ensure our shelters remain open** and that they continue to create more safety and dignity for Deschutes County’s residents. We are doing our part but need sustainable funding in order to continue this vital work. **We ask you to fully fund Oregon’s shelters so that we can build on the tremendous success we have had moving community members to more stable housing, and that you encourage the Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services (OHCS) to act expediently in working with communities to deploy funds.**

For these reasons, we urge your support of SB 1530. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact the CHRO Board at HouselessOffice@Deschutes.org regarding these comments.

Sincerely,

Chair Patti Adair
Deschutes County Commissioner

Vice-Chair Megan Perkins
City Councilor, City of Bend

Andrea Blum
City Councilor, City of Sisters

Cat Zwicker
City Councilor, City of Redmond

Daniel Richer
Mayor, City of La Pine

Molly Heiss
Deputy Executive Director, NeighborImpact

Eliza Wilson
Chair of the Homeless Leadership Coalition (OR-503 CoC) & Director of Runaway & Homeless Youth Programs (RHY) J Bar J Youth Services