



12 February 2024

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon Legislature

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

The Community Action Partnership of Oregon writes in support of the -3 Amendments of Senate Bill 1530, which will provide additional sheltering funding to our financially strained sheltering system. We appreciate your leadership on these critical issues, in fighting the gathering crisis around housing and homelessness in Oregon.

Our member Community Action Agencies have been fighting poverty and homelessness for sixty years. We are proud of our long history of housing and sheltering Oregonians in all 36 counties. We operate housing and shelters, fund many local partner agencies, and have prevented more than 100,000 Oregonians from losing their homes through the recent pandemic. We have also played a major role in the successful first year of the Governor's Emergency Order response to the homeless crisis, carrying the largest single share of the Governor's new housing and sheltering work across Oregon.

Oregon is pushing forward the most aggressive housing production plan in a generation. That new construction must also be supported by a wave of supportive services funding that addresses the complexity of our homeless crisis, including more funding for behavioral health and substance treatment services, to keep people in their homes once housed. But the first step in the continuum of that service system, the final and ultimate answer to our housing crisis, is providing safe and adequate shelter stock over the full geography of Oregon. You can count on our support as you work to turn the tide on the most pressing social issue facing Oregon today.

We further support the additional service investments highlighted in SB 1530, which include:

- \$65 million for emergency shelter operation;
- \$40 million for homeless prevention through the Oregon Eviction Diversion and Prevention (OR-DAP) program and the Eviction Prevention Rapid Response (EPRR) program;
- \$5 million for the Individual Development Accounts (IDA) program;
- \$2 million for emergency warming and cooling shelters funded by the Oregon Department of Human Services; and
- \$7,500,000 for deposit into the Healthy Homes Repair Fund;

These are all vital additions to a strained sheltering system, which is stepping down from COVID-era financial support at a time when Oregon's homeless population grew 22 percent between 2020-2022, and another 12 percent in 2023. That growth will accelerate in the years to come as the full social and economic consequences of the pandemic years play out.

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Our member Community Action Agencies have also provided the backbone of Oregon's eviction prevention efforts going back to the early days of the pandemic in 2020, building on top of sixty years of anti-poverty and homeless prevention work in all 36 Oregon counties. Of the more than \$1 billion in state and federal funds provided to endangered Oregon households since the summer of 2020, Community Action has led the majority of that work, saving tens of thousands of vulnerable Oregonians from losing their homes. We are the only network in Oregon that has a full 36-county presence and we know our local communities and service partners well. We are eager to step forward once again, and lead the eviction prevention efforts SB 1530 would fund.

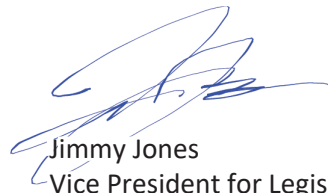
In the spirit of partnership and collaboration, we offer not only our support for the framework, but our hope that (given how fast the homeless crisis is changing) Oregon Housing and Community Services will have appropriate flexibility to allocate and distribute these funds quickly and efficiently in a strategic fashion. Funded and functioning shelter stock is critical in protecting not only the lives but also the dignity of our neighbors living outside. We therefore urge you to consider baseline funding for all shelter operators, not just those who are struggling to keep the doors open. We also strongly support the critical intention to cover both administrative and housing-focused services. In the most recent shelter allocation, there was too little flexibility, no ability to subcontract with smaller and culturally specific agencies, and no support for administrative costs. These are real costs and vital flexibilities, imperative elements of a successful sheltering system. Lastly, the pandemic demonstrated that capacity to deliver services varied widely, as did outcomes. We strongly urge scrutiny in awards and allocations, with a mind toward an organization's ability to meet the clear, defined outcomes that made the Governor's Executive Order program so successful.

To conclude, SB 1530 presents a significant step forward in tackling our homeless crisis, providing critical capacity for our at-risk shelter operations, and breathes new life into the state's eviction prevention efforts, which the Legislature continues to prioritize. We urge the Committee to support SB 1530 and work toward its swift passage. The well-being and future of our fellow Oregonians depend on it. Thank you for your attention to these critical issues facing our communities, and for your dedication to making Oregon a place where everyone has a safe and affordable place to call home, a land where no one suffers the indignities and dangers of unsheltered homelessness.

Respectfully,



Dan Brown
President



Jimmy Jones
Vice President for Legislative Affairs