



310 NW Glisan St
Portland, OR 97209
info@blanchethouse.org
503 241 4340

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To the Senate Committee on Housing and Homelessness:

Blanchet House of Hospitality calls on the Legislature to make significant investments in housing and homelessness prevention through SB 1530.

For more than 70 years, Blanchet House has served free, hot meals to people experiencing homelessness or food insecurity in Old Town, Portland. We also operate two long-term transitional housing programs—one in Old Town and one in Yamhill County—where men have the time and support they need to recover from homelessness, unemployment, trauma, and addiction.

Housing Oregon, Governor Kotek and the Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) are advocating for a vital investment of \$65 million in Oregon's homeless shelters and transitional housing system. This funding is essential to stabilize our existing shelter capacity and enhance the outcomes of our shelter system. It includes crucial support for services like housing navigation and assistance with obtaining identification, which are key steps in transitioning individuals from shelters to permanent housing.

With only one year-round emergency shelter bed for every three individuals experiencing homelessness in Oregon, the need for stable, ongoing funding cannot be overstated. Such funding would allow providers to concentrate more on delivering crucial services and less on financial survival.

Furthermore, ensuring that shelters remain open and operational is not just a matter of addressing homelessness; it is also an issue of racial and geographic equity. Disproportionate rates of homelessness among Black, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaskan Native Oregonians highlight the racial disparities that need to be addressed. Moreover, nearly 40% of shelters at risk of closure are located in the Balance of State CoC, underscoring the statewide impact of this issue.

The request for \$65 million is a necessary step towards a more equitable and just Oregon. It is an investment in the basic human dignity of providing shelter to those in need. I urge you to consider this request with the seriousness and urgency it deserves, recognizing that it is not just a financial decision but a moral imperative.

Thank you for your dedication to serving the people of Oregon.

Scott Kerman

Scott Kerman
Executive Director