



We build strength, stability, self-reliance *and* shelter.

Feb. 21, 2025

To: House Committee on Housing and Homelessness

RE: Support for HB 3644

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Breese-Iverson, Vice-Chair Andersen and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shannon Vilhauer and I am the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Oregon. On behalf of our organization and the 23 local Habitat for Humanity affiliates we serve, we urge your strong support for House Bill **3644**, which implements the statewide shelter system.

Habitat for Humanity's vision is "a world where everyone has a decent place to live". Unsheltered homelessness is a humanitarian crisis that endangers personal health and wellbeing—often compounding trauma experienced by some of our communities' most vulnerable members.

Oregon shelter providers meet these humans where they are with compassion and care. While the term "trauma-informed" seems to be trending, at Habitat for Humanity we're still inclined to call it love, acceptance and practical support of many kinds, including shelter.

Through Governor Kotek's emergency response addressing unsheltered homelessness, and partnership with the Legislature to fund increased shelter, rehousing, and prevention services, Oregon is projected to support over 4,800 shelter beds, rehouse 3,300 households, and prevent another 24,000 households from experiencing homelessness by June 30, 2025.

Many of us believe strongly that the intersectional harms of homelessness are best addressed through its prevention. Ensuring that tens of thousands of Oregonians never experience homelessness in the first place also enhances the livability of the communities we share.

In July of 2024, Governor Kotek and Representative Pam Marsh co-convened a sustainable shelter work group tasked with developing recommendations for a permanent state shelter program. This work group directly engaged practitioners and government partners from rural, urban and suburban Oregon communities. Members of this task force included highly trusted and revered affordable housing colleagues.

With the passage of HB 3644, our state will transition from addressing homelessness through scattered emergency responses, to developing and refining a regionally coordinated shelter and rehousing system. Providers will stay "small where they need to be" by serving community members on the ground with local and outcomes-based practices.

As we unite to provide shelter solutions that promote the long-term stability of our communities' most vulnerable members, every resident of Oregon's cities and towns will benefit.

The Habitat for Humanity network would like to publicly thank Oregon's frontline shelter staff. These talented and compassionate professionals work tireless hours to provide uplifting and life-affirming services amidst challenging human circumstances. We think the world of you.

HB 3644 provides critical stabilization for the statewide shelter system—that has successfully rehoused and stabilized thousands of Oregonians. We urge your strong support.

Thank you for your leadership and service,



Shannon M. Vilhauer, Executive Director