



April 15, 2021

City Councilor Claire Syrett Testimony on behalf of the City of Eugene in Support of HB2006

Chair Jama and Members of the Committee:

For the record, I am Claire Syrett, Eugene City Councilor for Ward 7, council vice president, and Chair of the Eugene City Council's Intergovernmental Relations Committee, here today to speak on behalf of the City of Eugene in support of House Bill 2006. Thank you for providing me with this opportunity to speak to you today.

As you have heard today, HB 2006 resurrects the super-siting provisions for low-barrier navigation centers in several communities, including Eugene, first proposed in HB 4001 during the 2020 Session. While the provisions of this bill and the assistance they bring were delayed, the homelessness crisis in our communities has continued to dramatically increase; and it is only exacerbated by the Coronavirus pandemic. Communities desperately need direct financial and policy assistance from the State to address this crisis. HB 2006 is a start to changing this situation and represents an important commitment by the State to provide much needed policy assistance. We are hopeful that the federal government will also step up and demonstrate a new focus on addressing the needs of states and local government in responding to the homelessness crisis.

The City of Eugene and Lane County have been working in a strategic partnership for over two years to implement the findings from our joint Shelter Feasibility and Homelessness System Assessment; which includes the establishment a low barrier shelter with an attached Navigation Center. The \$5 million dollars of direct funding provided in the current budget reconciliation bill, HB 5042, will be used to support the development and operation of an Emergency Shelter and Navigation Center in Eugene. I want to express my sincere thanks to the Legislature for making that funding a priority for our community **now**, rather than waiting until the next biennium. My ward hosts many of the current shelter sites in Eugene and has hundreds of homeless people camping in our parks and public right of ways. This additional funding will make

a tremendous difference both for my ward and in our community by allowing us to act quickly to provide these people with safe and humane shelter options.

The City is supportive of the super-siting provisions of HB 2006, and has already seen significant interest in this process in our community. Last fall, Eugene received and approved seven applications for temporary shelter sites using the temporary authority provided by HB4212, adopted during this summer's first special session. Our local applicants included Lane County, St Vincent de Paul, and First Baptist Church. For this process, Eugene developed a robust webpage that provides links to the legislation, an overview and explanation of the super-siting and application processes, and explanation of the city's super-siting decisions. We are proud of our community's ability and willingness to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the State's super-siting legislation and to take steps to implement shelter and housing solutions, especially in the midst of the continued pandemic emergency.

We also support the proposed revisions to the definition of emergency shelter, to expand the definition from "a building" to "a building or cluster of buildings" as this will clearly allow more providers of innovative shelter solutions in Eugene to take advantage of the super-siting process. With this and some of the other proposed changes to the bill language, we expect to receive additional super-siting applications from local partners increasing our ability to serve people experiencing homelessness.

In closing, I want to extend my deep appreciation to Speaker Kotek for continuing to prioritize this issue. I thank you for your service to our State, and I urge you to support HB 2006.

