



WASHINGTON COUNTY OREGON

Thursday February 20, 2020

President Peterson and Metro Councilors
Metro Regional Government
600 NE Grand Avenue
Portland, OR 97232

Dear President Peterson and Metro Councilors,

For the last ten months Washington County staff and I have attended countless meetings with the advisory committee and various sub-committees of the Here Together Coalition, working to build a response to the homeless crisis. And, it is not lost on me how hard the dedicated Metro staff have been working since the decision by this Council to move ahead with this permanent supportive services initiative.

I am before you today knowing you don't have a decision or debate in front of you at this particular meeting.

But, here's what we know: there is a homeless crisis.

The Metro Affordable Housing Bond passed has allowed to invest throughout the region to deal with one piece of the crisis: the infrastructure.

Now I believe it's time we stand together as a region to invest in the critical services needed to help those who are hardest to house including individuals experiencing major health issues, those with behavioral disorders including substance abuse disorder or mental health challengers, or those fleeing domestic violence.

The homeless crisis is not unique to this this region – this is a crisis being faced by local jurisdictions throughout the country. What's unique here is our ability as counties to work with Metro on a regional solution.

If this ballot measure is referred and the voters decide to pass it at the ballot in May, you have a commitment from me today -- as the Chair of Washington County's Board of Commissioners -- that we will work to provide best practice services within our counties borders and to be good partners as we build out regional systems of support.

As you consider next steps for this Council, I urge you to take seriously the need to raise \$250 million per year in this region. Time and again the experts have told us this is what we need to address this crisis head on.

I urge you to take the vote to refer this initiative at the full \$250 million annually so we can take one step closer to funding the services that we know can help one of our region's most vulnerable populations.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Harrington, Chair
Washington County Board of Commissioners

Board of County Commissioners

155 North First Avenue, Suite 300, MS 22, Hillsboro, OR 97124-3072
phone: (503) 846-8681 • fax: (503) 846-4545