



CITY OF
PORTLAND, OREGON

PORTLAND HOUSING BUREAU

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Representative Greg Matthews, Chair
House Veterans' Services and Emergency Preparedness Committee
900 Court St. NE, Room 453
Salem, OR 97301

February 14, 2013

Dear Chair Matthews and Members of the Committee,

The Portland Housing Bureau is committed to solving the unmet housing needs of low-income Portlanders. This commitment extends to the men and women who have bravely served our country, and now find themselves either homeless or at risk of homelessness. HB 2417 provides the funding needed to alleviate the hardships that are borne by our military veterans. On behalf of the City of Portland, I would like to express my support and encourage your support for HB 2417.

The statewide shortage of affordable housing places a heavy burden on veterans. Oregon's veterans experience homelessness at a higher rate than other Oregonians with veterans representing one in six people in shelters. During the past decade, the need to prevent homelessness among veterans has become increasingly urgent as younger generations return from military service to an economy with fewer opportunities. The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates veterans who became homeless after returning from Iraq and Afghanistan did so within their first three years, compared with 13 years for Vietnam-era veterans.

HB 2417 provides a critical response for Oregon's veterans. Increasing the existing document recording fee by \$5 and dedicating a minimum of 25 percent of those funds to assist homeless veterans or veterans at risk of homelessness would significantly strengthen proven strategies. The City of Portland recognizes that linking veterans with the resources they need is crucial in reducing the number of veterans living on our streets. In 2012, the City of Portland worked with our partners, REACH CDC, Oregon Housing and Community Services and HUD, to develop Gray's Landing. This new apartment complex of 209 affordable rental units guarantees homes for 42 veterans. Funds raised from HB 2417 can help build supportive housing like Gray's Landing, needed to ensure that veterans are connected to critical services such as job training, healthcare and recovery support. Likewise, by bolstering emergency rent assistance for veterans, funds from HB 2417 can prevent homelessness by intervening on the front lines to help veterans remain in their homes.

For these reasons, I ask that you support HB 2417. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Traci Manning
Director, Portland Housing Bureau