

## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND HOUSING

Oregon State Capitol

Room: HR E

900 Court Street NE, Room 453, Salem, Oregon 97301

Phone: 503-986-1509

AGENDA - THURSDAY, February 23, 2017

8:00 A.M.

### Overview of Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) and State Homeless Assistance Program (SHAP)

#### TESTIMONY

Thank you, Chair Keny-Guyer, Representatives Sanchez, Stark, Gorsek, Heard, Meek, Nearman, Noble and Piluso.

It is an honor to join you this morning to share how EHA and SHAP funds have been a significant, and lately even more dramatic, part of our efforts to improve the lives of our neighbors in need in Yamhill County. I'd like to begin with a story, and then share with you:

- What EHA and SHAP base funding has done for us until the beginning of the current fiscal year
- What the one year increase in EHA and SHAP funds is doing for us now
- How we have leveraged those funds
- How we can do even more

A family of five recently came to YCAP seeking rental assistance. The father had been injured, required surgery, and was not able to work for over a month while in physical rehab. During this time, the family was trying to live on TANF support (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). They were falling behind on their bills, and finally received the dreaded eviction notice. We stepped in and provided two months of rental assistance, which allowed the father to finish his physical therapy and return to his construction job. Three months later, the family remains stably housed and is working with us on a budget that will allow them to save for the future.

#### What EHA and SHAP base funding has done for us

For the 2015-17 biennium, we were allocated just under \$179,000 in EHA and \$80,000 in SHAP funds, for which we are extremely grateful. With EHA, we have offered homeless prevention, rapid rehousing, emergency and transitional shelter, and case management. These funds along with other grants provided a total of 157 households with one-time or longer term rental assistance. The flexibility of EHA dollars allows us to blend them with other funding sources to extend their impact.

Our SHAP grant funds shelter operations and case management for shelter residents. We own and manage three shelters in Yamhill County, two in McMinnville and one in Newberg. Together they can house up to 35 single women and families at one time. Many are fleeing domestic violence, and of course, many are children. Typically a total of about 130 persons live in our shelters over the course of a year, each from about 1 – 6 months.

#### What the one year increase in EHA and SHAP funds are doing for us now

With the remarkable and much needed one year funding increase last year, we were allocated an ADDITIONAL \$172,314 in EHA funds and \$48,304 in SHAP dollars. Combined with our base amount, this equates to 35% of our Client Services and Housing program budget.

When we heard that the additional funds were approved, our Adult and Youth Programs Director, Kate Stokes, sprung into action. She discussed with me her vision for an entire new Homeless Prevention and Shelter Diversion program, which included two new staff positions: a dedicated program Case Manager, and a Housing Specialist. This new program enables us to quickly provide more short-term rental assistance to households served with eviction notices or on the verge of losing their homes to mounting bills or a related crisis.

This new program also features a more concerted effort to connect with local landlords. Today our Housing Specialist Mary Leathers has built positive relationships with 46 kindhearted local landlords, many who have now committed to offer YCAP their available units before advertising them on the open market. Our last landlord lunch we hosted, to introduce the program to prospects, welcomed a dozen new landlords. We give them deposit and rental guarantees and case management with their tenants, which enable us to help more homeless households, many with extreme housing barriers, be rapidly re-housed. Our program Case Manager, Shauna Williams, also provides comprehensive guidance to help families maintain their housing and plan for the future.

The additional SHAP funds have enabled us to perform significant and much needed maintenance on our two McMinnville shelters. Last year we ripped out all of the nasty old carpet in both and installed new donated laminate flooring, as well as replaced all of the old beds. We've just recently installed new energy efficient windows, and we will soon begin completely painting both structures, which haven't had a new coat in about 25 years. These upgrades aid the physical and mental health of our clients, who are suffering through trauma, as well as improve the livability of the entire neighborhood.

### **How we have leveraged those funds**

Last summer we applied for a two year, \$100,000 Housing Opportunities grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust, which was intended to allow us to extend our Homeless Prevention and Shelter Diversion program even more. We got the grant, and we were told the primary reasons were 1) our track record of success with housing and homelessness programs, and 2) our Homelessness Prevention and Shelter Diversion program, funded by those new EHA dollars. That's successful leveraging, and we couldn't have done it without your generous investment.

### **So how we can do even more?**

Our new Prevention and Diversion program is taking off. Since September 2016 we have received 430 inquiries about it on our Homeless Prevention Hotline. In five months we've been able to help 45 households with EHA and SHAP funds alone, as we continue to build landlord relationships, pay back rents to avoid eviction, get people who do lose their homes through our shelters and into stable housing quickly, and give them the guidance and tools to maintain their success. But 45 households is a small fraction of the demand. We have the program management expertise, and the service staff talent to do even more. But like everybody else, we just need more resources. If we lose the increase in funding from the 2017 allocation, we'll lose at least one of our program positions, and no doubt serve significantly fewer clients.

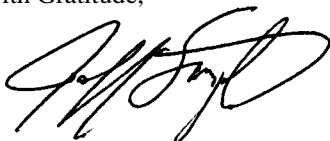
We all know how dire the availability of affordable housing is throughout the state. It is no different in Yamhill County. Keeping people in their homes, or getting them back into stable housing as rapidly as possible, is the best way to keep them off the streets and falling into further crisis, resulting in even greater costs to our health, social and law enforcement services.

Late last year a young pregnant woman and her partner came to us. They were living in an outdoor shed after losing their housing due to trauma in both families. A relative of the young girl found housing for the couple that included employment doing maintenance for the landlord, but the family couldn't afford to pay the security deposit to move in. YCAP worked with the landlord to pay the deposit, and the couple moved into stable housing in January. They now have a safe home for their baby to be born into, as both parents are working and making plans for the future.

That is just another one of thousands of heartwarming stories all across Oregon that you do and can continue to make possible. And to close with an appropriate Oregon analogy, you help us make that bridge, to offer that hand up that gets families across the floodwaters and back on solid ground.

Thank you for your time and support.

With Gratitude,



Jeff Sargent, Executive Director  
Yamhill Community Action Partnership (YCAP)