

Item 3: Housing and Community Services Department

Shelter Support

Analyst: Michelle Deister

Request: Allocate \$10.0 million from the Emergency Fund to the Housing and Community Services Department to support the provision of shelter and related services, with funding prioritized for wildfire impacted communities.

Description: With the pending onset of winter, communities continue to struggle with how to shelter the homeless. A shortage of more than 5,000 beds existed as of August 2019 per the Oregon Shelter study. Since that time, COVID-19 has increased costs and decreased capacity because of safety and distancing requirements, and recent wildfire displacement has further exacerbated the need for winter shelter. Due to the need for safe shelter scenarios resulting from COVID-19, and the more recent wildfire-related displacement, the Housing and Community Services Department (HCS D) is asking for additional funding for emergency shelter and related services, with wildfire impacted communities in Jackson, Marion, Lane, Lincoln, and Clackamas counties prioritized for funding allocations.

HCS D reports that, for the sake of expediency in granting the funds, it would utilize the master grant agreement with Community Action Agencies. More recent, additional data related to homelessness would be analyzed and input to influence the distribution of funds through the formula-driven grant agreement. This allows funding to be used for winter sheltering *and* wildfire-related displacement. Both remain important, given the sheltering constraints mentioned above, and that in some instances, persons displaced by wildfires have migrated to areas outside their home communities. All Community Action Agencies are expected to collaborate with culturally specific organizations. In fire impacted areas, the Community Action Agencies are required to work in coordination with county emergency command centers pursuant to disaster recovery plans, and will identify new or existing shelters, or temporary housing options to support unmet needs.

While a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Housing Mission has been approved for some of the wildfire affected counties -- enabling longer term temporary housing units such as trailers -- more immediate shelter services will be needed for individuals and families displaced by the wildfires until those federal resources can be put in place, and in places where a Housing Mission may not be approved. Because these funds are for sheltering services generally, the funds would be considered "public benefits" as opposed to "individual benefits," and not expected to interfere or create conflict with FEMA duplication of benefits for individuals applying for FEMA assistance.

Recommendation: The Co-Chairs of the Emergency Board recommend that the Emergency Board allocate \$10.0 million from the Emergency Fund to the Housing and Community Services Department to support the provision of shelter and related services.



Oregon

Governor Kate Brown

Housing and Community Services

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October 20, 2020

The Honorable Senator Peter Courtney, Co-Chair
The Honorable Representative Tina Kotek, Co-Chair
State Emergency Board
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301-4048

RE: Need for Safe Shelter Funding, Requesting \$10,000,000

Dear Co-Chairpersons:

Nature of the Request

Oregon Housing and Community Services Department (OHCS) is requesting that \$10 million from the Emergency Fund be allocated to the department to support safe sheltering and related services across the state. These funds will respond to both the COVID-19 pandemic and the wildfire disaster.

Agency Action

COVID-19 has changed how shelter operations work across the state. Instead of crowded church basements and volunteer staff, shelters should now allow for physical distancing and be professionally staffed. These necessary changes have increased the cost of operations for Oregon's shelter network. Service providers across the state have been focused on providing rental and energy assistance to prevent homelessness during the COVID-19 health and economic crisis. However, even prior to the pandemic, Oregon had one of the nation's highest rates of unsheltered homelessness. Too many of our neighbors are living outside and in need of sheltering. As we enter the winter inclement weather season, funds for safe shelter and related services are needed to ensure that every Oregon community has sufficient resources on hand to provide shelter for people experiencing homelessness. These emergency funds would be geared toward sheltering and temporary housing options that use best practices from the vantage point of homeless services, COVID-19 response, and equity and racial justice.

The safe sheltering funds will be administered through community action agencies (CAAs) across the state, with funding allocations prioritizing wildfire impacted communities. In the wake of wildfire-related displacement, many communities are seeing increased need. A FEMA Housing Mission has been approved for some of the affected counties at the time of this request (Jackson, Linn, and Marion), which authorizes FEMA to provide longer term temporary housing units such as trailers. However, more immediate shelter services will likely be needed for individuals and

families displaced by the wildfires until those federal resources can be put in place, and in counties where a housing mission has not been approved.

Sheltering provided through this request should be non-congregant. OHCS will allocate funds through its Master Grant Agreement to CAAs across the state, ensuring that the funds will be available as quickly as possible. CAAs will collaborate with culturally specific organizations and other service providers in supporting, expanding, or establishing shelter. In fire impacted areas, CAAs will be required to work in coordination with county emergency command centers to identify existing or new shelters or temporary housing options to support these dollars and address unmet needs stemming from the wildfires. Because these funds would constitute “public benefits” as opposed to “individual benefits”, they are not expected to interfere or create conflict with FEMA duplication of benefits for individuals applying for FEMA assistance.

Action Requested

OHCS requests that the Emergency Board allocate \$10 million General Fund from the Emergency Fund to the Department, for the purpose of providing safe sheltering across the state, including in wildfire impacted communities.

Legislation Affected

Chapter 642, Section 1, Oregon Laws 2019.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MS Salazar', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Margaret Solle Salazar, Executive Director

cc: Ken Rocco, Legislative Fiscal Office
Michelle Deister, Legislative Fiscal Office
George Naughton, Department of Administrative Services
Alisa Webb, Department of Administrative Services