



**OREGON HOUSING *and*
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

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House Interim Committee on Housing
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-4048

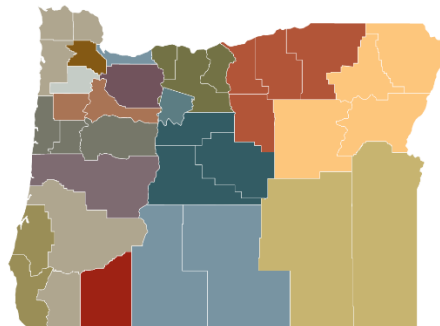
Re: Follow Up Information on the OHCS Presentation

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Morgan, and Members of the House Interim Committee on Housing:

We at Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) are grateful for the continued partnership with the Oregon Legislature. Thank you for your time yesterday morning and for your thoughtful questions. While we answered your questions in the committee, we are glad to provide written follow-ups.

Representative Hieb: How would I link somebody up with a local organization? Who would they contact? For example: How would I connect someone who is living out of their car with services?

Individuals experiencing homelessness or needing housing services should contact [their local Community Action Agency](#) (CAA). There are 17 regional CAAs serving all 36 Oregon counties and the Oregon Human Development Corporation, which serves Oregon's farmworker population. Below is the geographic breakdown of the service areas for each agency:



OHCS provides funding to CAAs to provide an array of housing services to Oregonians, including shelter services, rapid rehousing, rental assistance, energy assistance, and now eviction prevention services. As a part of eviction prevention funding, CAAs are also required to work with local culturally responsive organizations to provide those services.

Individuals seeking services can locate their Community Action Agency or other providers in their community by calling 2-1-1. OHCS is also happy to connect Legislative Offices with the CAAs that provide services in their districts. Representative Hieb's CAA is [Clackamas County Social Services](#).



Representative Zika: OHCS had some issues with timing when it came to getting funds to landlords. How is that going? Have you shortened the amount of time it takes for landlords to get checks?

Throughout the process of administering the Oregon Emergency Rental Assistance Program, OHCS has been focused on getting funds out to Oregonians as quickly as possible and has remained committed to continual process improvements. Those improvements have included:

- Centralizing the rental assistance system was a major factor in processing applications more quickly. During the height of the program, Public Partnerships LLC (PPL) had more staff supporting OERAP than the totality of OHCS agency staff.
- Working with service providers, tenant organizations, landlord organizations, and advocates to gather feedback on the OERAP application. Based on this feedback, we are made improvements to the online system that were implemented upon the re-opening of the portal in January.
- Revising of the Landlord Contact Information section of the application on the back end, which made it easier to use, has led to more accurate information in the system, and reduces communication to clarify information.
- Clarifying of Landlord Participation Request/Payment Approved email notification language so landlords have clear confirmation that their tenant has been approved for assistance and their program participation is required.
- Embedding the Income Self-Verification form in the application, instead of requiring tenants to upload a separate signed document.
- Streamlining the COVID Impact Question to simplify how tenants can declare they have been impacted.
- OHCS staff and PPL leadership meet weekly to address system challenges, troubleshoot, and work to streamline processes and make improvements to application processing

As was noted during our presentation, OHCS prioritizes the highest need applications first, meaning that some applicants may wait longer than others as the OERAP system is not first-come-first-served. In the last few months, OHCS has also seen an uptick in applications that are potentially ineligible and require a higher degree of attention, and thus time, to ensure they are compliant with program rules. We remain committed to deploying funds as quickly as possible while maintaining prudent fiscal controls to ensure only eligible applications are paid.

Representative Zika: What do evictions look like now?

The Legislature successfully anticipated the ongoing needs of Oregonians in crafting an offramp from emergency rental assistance funding by granting OHCS an additional \$100 million in Eviction Prevention funding for further services. Not all states have done that, and Oregon is seeing the benefits. Eviction Prevention funds are being distributed, and our community partners are working hard to keep Oregonians housed. OHCS is also working to be strategic in our program decisions to make both Emergency Rental Assistance and Eviction Prevention dollars stretch.

Your action to extend the safe harbor period and deploy historic resources in eviction prevention is working. Eviction rates, while rising, are still lower now than they were in 2019. Our partners are hard at work to prevent as many as possible through a combination of rental assistance, case management, mediation services, and legal services.



Yet, the fact of the matter remains that the need for support will outpace available resources. It is likely that eviction filings will continue to increase over the summer after tenants can no longer access the safe harbor period. OHCS will continue to elevate our needs, and the Legislature should expect to hear from us more about this as we head into the 2023 session.

Representative Zika: What happens when funding dries up?

We've known that despite these historic levels of resources— both for emergency rental assistance and eviction prevention efforts— it is still not enough to meet the great need across the state as Oregonians struggle to recover from the pandemic. That is why OHCS has carefully targeted resources to the most vulnerable households and has requested additional reallocated Emergency Rental Assistance funds from other states. OHCS has also been in close coordination with our federal partners to demonstrate both the level of need and our capacity to deliver additional federal Emergency Rental Assistance funds.

As OHCS prepares our Agency Request Budget for the 2023 Session, you can expect us to elevate funding needs that will allow us to continue investing in the systems and partnerships we have cultivated over the last few years.

