

April 20, 2021
House Committee on Housing
Informational Hearing on Local Technical Assistance

Members of the House Committee on Housing:

Thank you for the opportunity to share the importance of local technical assistance through this informational hearing. As we've seen exacerbated by the pandemic, cities and counties across Oregon face serious challenges related to housing, whether it be homelessness, lack of affordable housing for low-income residents, housing for seniors, veterans housing or workforce housing. There is a major capacity deficit in rural cities and counties that prevents them from removing barriers and seizing opportunities for all forms of housing in their jurisdictions.

Communities who want to make progress on housing issues, however, can benefit from technical assistance in a variety of areas including land use, financing, tax credits, special needs housing and multi-partner collaboration efforts. We know that County Commissioners are equipped to play a unique role in convening the key local government, state government, federal government, private sector and nonprofit partners that are often needed to move the needle on housing challenges. On behalf of all 36 County governments, AOC requests state assistance in supporting the last mile of funding for Communities across the state.

In 2017, an initiative to better support and resource local technical assistance took root at the Association of Oregon Counties, under the leadership of Commissioner Martha Schrader. From this work, HB 2228 (now [HB 3260](#)) was born. The bill proposes regional staff provide technical support to build basic capacity in all corners of the state, including:

- Helping communities get through the first key stages of the housing pipeline that consists of a housing needs analysis and a buildable lands inventory;
- Changing comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances;
- Completing initial community readiness and project feasibility and ballpark pro formas;
- Identifying funding strategies for key infrastructure needs that hinder or stymie housing development;
- Providing general community development housing support such as conducting asset mapping and identifying needed land availability, incentives, financial programs, community issues and the on the ground conditions which can hinder or help launch projects and then develop integrated approaches;
- Providing overall coordination and staff support for the convening role that local elected officials can play to bring multiple stakeholders together to develop and implement on-the-ground, integrated housing solutions
- Convening private, civic and community groups needed to deliver housing.

Unfortunately, HB 2228 did not make it through the budgeting process in the 2019 session. As a result of that work, a pilot project was developed.

A partnership of Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS), the League of Cities, and the Department of Land Conservation and Development and AOC County Solutions launched a

Housing Technical Assistance program in 2020. This effort was funded by a \$150,000 investment from OHCS.

In August 2020, Coos County received a \$25,000 grant to help in recruiting and retaining a housing coordinator to assist in the implementation of the housing studies for both Coos and Curry Counties. Just months later, this investment leveraged a Meyer Foundation grant of an additional \$120,000 to also support this housing coordination work.

In addition, the pilot has provided \$40,000 for coastal cities and counties to hire and update local land development codes and associated comprehensive plan updates.

Lastly, the pilot is poised to invest an additional \$70,000 to provide direct technical assistance to cities and counties to identify available land, attract developers, and provide general technical support for needed housing development projects.

HB 3260 was re-introduced in the 2021 legislative session to continue the conversation about much needed technical assistance. However, as the pandemic and wildfires took up much of the capacity of local governments and state agencies, and the need for synchronization of the four entities mentioned in the bill, more work is required to make this concept a success this year. We look forward to bringing this concept back in 2022 with the readiness, and zeal that our communities in need of housing deserve.

Sincerely,
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