



**OREGON HOUSING *and*
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

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Housing Committee On Housing and Homelessness
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: OHCS Introduction Presentation Follow Up

Chair Dexter, Vice-Chairs Helfrich and Gamba, Members of the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness,

Thank you for making space for OHCS to introduce ourselves and our work to this committee. As you begin to dive into one of the most intractable challenges our state faces, I am heartened to see your interest and resolve in finding solutions across the housing continuum. During the conversation, committee members raised questions and key issues:

Who is experiencing homelessness?

The [Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)'s 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report](#), which provides estimates of homelessness in communities across the nation, tells us that as of January 2022, 17,959 Oregonians were experiencing homelessness. Over 11,000 people were experiencing homelessness without shelter, more than double the population of the City of Tillamook. This data is based on 2022 Point in Time (PIT) count and Housing Inventory Count data. PIT count data is considered an undercount. As was mentioned by Rep. Levy, regional challenges and capacity constraints can affect community's ability to perform their PIT count, as well as unique challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, including reduced volunteer capacity and the ability to conduct the count safely. It is also critical to note that because of federal rules, the count does not include thousands of people who were "doubled up," staying with friends or family. Culturally specific providers frequently report that people of color are more likely to experience homelessness this way and are underrepresented in homelessness data as a result. On top of the staggering data, we know that Oregon regularly ranks top five in unsheltered homelessness, particularly for families, Veterans, and seniors.

Oregon doesn't currently see statewide data collection regarding the last known (permanent/housed) address of individuals experiencing homelessness. However, on the local level, [Multnomah County's 2022 Point in Time Count](#) found that 76.4% of individuals experiencing homelessness they surveyed were either already from the region or had lived there for more than two years. Nearly 60% of all respondents were not experiencing homelessness upon arrival to the county. This number only increases for those who had recently moved to the region.

This data is also similarly mirrored in California, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) began asking Individuals experiencing homelessness about where they became homeless. Their [2019 Point in Time count](#) found that 64% of the 58,936 Los Angeles County residents experiencing homelessness had lived in the region for more than ten years, and only approximately 18% said they had lived out of state before becoming homeless.



How are services prioritized given limited resources?

Oregon has historically and continues to be under-resourced to address the scale of our housing crisis. With limited resources, the state and local communities have identified targeted populations to make progress. The Statewide Housing Plan identifies families and Veterans as target populations, and OHCS works closely with the Department of Human Services' Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program to address youth homelessness and support housing access and retention for youth.

Supporting Oregonians hesitant to access services to achieve housing.

It is critical to note that in [Oregon's 2018 Statewide Shelter Study](#), some of the primary concerns outlined by people experiencing homelessness in seeking shelter and services primarily include safety and privacy. Participants cited frequent check-ins from staff, crowding, and concerns regarding sanitation as potential barriers to seeking shelter. LGBTQIA+ respondents also cited discrimination or barriers related to gender identity and/or sexual orientation as a top concern.

While Oregon works to invest in additional shelters while funding and resourcing the shelters that currently exist to support in an effort to mitigate these concerns, we must acknowledge that many Oregonians who are less likely to access shelter do so because of systemic issues like those cited above. When offered access to housing with supportive services, providers find that most people accept. For example, OHCS joined HUD's House America Initiative in 2022 to rehouse 3,500 Oregonians sleeping outside and was able to [achieve and exceed that goal](#)- the demand for access to housing far exceeds the number of community members who may be hesitant to access supports.

Importance of working with those with lived experience.

OHCS and service providers partners rely on people with lived experience to design interventions from permanent supportive housing to street outreach strategies and shelter resources. We must acknowledge the long-term impact and trauma of unsheltered homelessness, and that healing from that trauma takes time and grace. Using those with lived experience's voices can help OHCS and partners design successful programs to help folks access services.

Challenges OHCS faces in finding housing solutions.

OHCS advances our mission of improving affordable housing access for low- and moderate-income Oregonians. The scale of our housing stock needs presents a challenge in accessing affordable housing. Ultimately, the lack of housing supply has led to cost increases for renters and homebuyers alike. It took decades of underproduction to get here, and without intervention, it will take many decades to increase the housing supply.

OHCS and our community partners look forward to engaging with this committee and the Legislature as we work to address the multitude of challenges that make up our housing crisis. We will lead with our values and data-driven solutions with a vision that we do not have to accept homelessness as a fact of life.

In partnership,
Andrea Bell
Executive Director

