



Date: April 20th, 2023
To: House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
From: Jennifer Parrish Taylor, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy for the Urban League of Portland
Re: Support for Further Codifying OHCS Homeless Services Work and Funding System Shifts, SB 893

Chair Dexter and Vice Chairs Gamba and Helfrich, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 893. My name is Jennifer Parrish Taylor, and I am testifying in my capacity as the Director of Advocacy and Public Policy at the Urban League of Portland. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans, and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life across Oregon and SW Washington.

Senate Bill 893 would prevent unnecessary delays in contracting and fund distribution by ensuring the Oregon Housing Stability Council is not required to approve each individual grant agreement the agency enters into, which can result in delays of up to two months. Rather, the Housing Stability Council would approve a framework for grant agreements which can then be more quickly executed to ensure needed funds reach Oregon communities. This change is in line with other similar agency practices and processes. Additionally for the non-profits who contract with the state, it would mean that we could more reliably count on the timelines for financial disbursements, which would allow for confident programmatic planning, rather than having to wait to be reimbursed for work that has already taken place or worse having to delay services.

Senate Bill 893 would continue to build upon the work of HB 2100, which passed in 2021, was designed to increase equal opportunity in contracting with Oregon Housing and Community Services. Prior to its passage, Oregon Revised Statutes limited anti-poverty funding solely to the Community Action Agency (CAA)'s for the express purpose of ensuring geographic equity in disbursement. This meant that pretty much any funding related to anti-poverty measures – economic development, rent assistance, homelessness service resources, etc. were statutorily entitled and granted to community action agencies through no competitive process and with zero legislatively mandated outcomes related to service delivery or equity. The HB 2100 Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities was formed, for which the League is a member, and charged with studying the disparities in homelessness and claims made by BIPOC advocates at the time, that the CAA distribution network was not producing equitable outcomes, was overserving white populations, and that this statutory limitation was contributing to inequitable access to homelessness services for BIPOC communities.

We assembled, conducted the study, found what was claimed to be true and were tasked with submitting a list of recommendations about how to remedy this issue and change the EHA/SHAP funding structure. We produced a report of our findings in January of 2022 and later a set of implementation recommendations in March of 2023; the report echoed some of these same recommendations but specifically mentions a targeted approach to “grow the pie” between now and the end of the 2023 - 2025 biennium, when a new EHA and SHAP funding structure is in place. These funding pots would use both a targeted universalist direct-non-competitive procurement process to immediately redress 40+ years of divestments AND



competitive grant processes to build capacity for agencies not included in EHA/SHAP funding, as well as begin to target Oregonians left out of homeless services and/or who were not served/adequately served by CAAs.

SB 893 seeks to codify OHCS' next steps in implementing recommendations from the Task Force to begin to reimagine how Oregon addresses homelessness in communities statewide by requiring OHCS to:

1. Engage in planning efforts to implement the Task Force's recommendations to modify Oregon's homeless services funding structure, including establishing dedicated, direction allocations to:
 - The nine federal recognized tribes that border within Oregon;
 - Community Action Agencies;
 - Continuum of Care (CoC) and local planning groups structured similarly to coordinated homeless response offices established in House Bill 4123 (2022);
 - Culturally specific, culturally responsive, culturally based, and other organizations that are focused on reducing disparities where there is a demonstrated overrepresentation in homelessness.
2. Provide policy frameworks for these modifications to the Legislature for implementation during the 2025-2027 biennium, including programs and resources that may need to be abolished or sunset as a result of the changes.
3. Utilize outcome-oriented contracting processes and evidence-based and emerging practices for programs developed under this framework.

Senate Bill 893 marks a decisive step forward in addressing Oregon's homelessness crisis in a more equitable and holistic manner. Our communities cannot afford to go back, to lose ground on all the progress that the state has made to date. We urge you to support Senate Bill 893.

Respectfully,

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