



Oregon

Governor Kate Brown

Housing and Community Services

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March 25, 2019

Senator James Manning, Co-Chair
Representative David Gomberg, Co-Chair

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-4048

Re: Additional information related to Oregon Housing and Community Services 2019-2021 budget

Dear Co-Chairs,

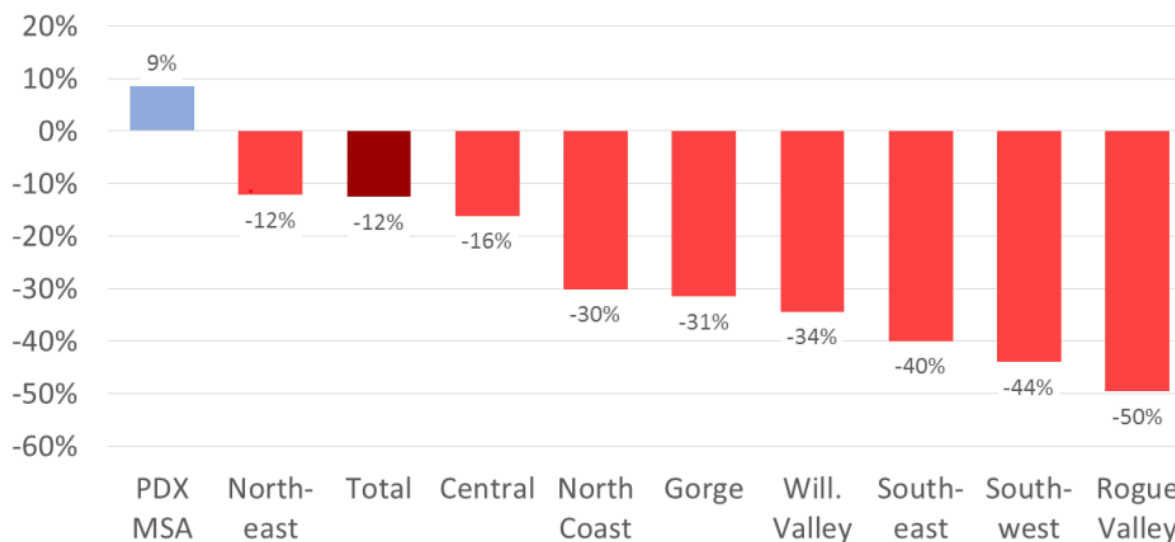
Thank you for the opportunity to share the work we do at Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS). We appreciated your attention as we discussed our proposed budget. During the three days we presented, your committee raised a number of important questions. Our responses are below.

Building Permits Geographical Locations

Megan Bolton, Senior Research Analyst at OHCS, shared the residential building permits in Oregon from 2000 – 2017. Representative Leif raised the question about geographical distribution of building permits. We do see a vast difference in building permits issued by region. The figure below shows development throughout Oregon, highlighting the need in Greater Oregon for additional tools to increase their housing supply. Additionally, [our county profiles show new building permits in each county](#).

Low Levels of New Construction

2017 Permits Relative to 1998-2003 Average



Source: HUD, Oregon Office of Economic Analysis



Sweeps Prior to the Point-in-Time Count

We know communities throughout Oregon use what is referred to as “sweeps” to clear areas where homeless people camp. During the conversation about the bi-annual Point-in-Time Count of those experiencing homelessness, Representative Evans raised concerns about law enforcement and other property owners conducting sweeps that disturb locations where the homeless population gathers. Certainly this scenario would make it harder to account for those individuals and the Point-in-Time Count is an important tool for understanding Oregon’s homeless populations. Our understanding is that sweeps have been an issue in some communities in recent years, however many of our partners report improved coordination with local law enforcement and other entities that is resulting in better outcomes, including more accurate Point-in-Time Counts.

OHCS Investments in Tsunami Inundation Zones

Co-Chair Gomberg asked whether OHCS funds projects in the tsunami inundation zones. OHCS does not have restrictions on funds in relation to tsunami inundation zones. OHCS is committed to serving Oregonians experiencing poverty, and we know that our coastal communities have some of the highest rates of rent burden and homelessness (particularly student homelessness).

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) – On-Site Services

When we discussed PSH, Co-Chair Manning asked about services available on site at PSH buildings. These services will vary drastically depending on the population served, the size of the development, and the community it serves. While PSH is a new model in Oregon we anticipate that an appropriate mix of services like the ones identified below will be available. Not yet implemented statewide, it is difficult to say with certainty what these projects will look like in Oregon.

For one example, the Portland Apartments at Bud Clark Commons provide studios with an on-site operations team and partner organizations to assist residents with case management; medical, mental health, substance abuse treatment; vocational, employment, and money management services; life skills training; and advocacy. Also on-site is a day center to provide services to those currently experiencing homelessness, including: showers, laundry, clothes, food, information and referrals; education, GED, and computer skills; basic care, health and nutrition education, and connections to medical providers; and assists with locating, successfully applying and maintaining housing.

The Commons on MLK is another PSH project, opening in Eugene in 2020. There will be services related to case management, behavior health counseling, addiction and substance counseling, and peer supports. The supportive services plan for The Commons on MLK will follow the evidence-based Intensive Case Management model and residents can access support at all hours. Qualified Mental Health Associates Case Managers will provide life skills support, employment and education assistance, among other guidance. A Certified Alcohol Drug Counselor and a Qualified Mental Health Professional will be available on-site for residents with substance abuse and/or Serious and Persistent Mental Illness to build relationships and better understand their needs. Additionally, Peer Support Specialists will be on-site. Because of their lived experience, these individuals create authentic peer-based connections.

Working with Local Governments

We discussed some of our partnerships with local governments during the hearing. Senator Golden discussed local governments' role in affordable housing development and OHCS work with local governments. OHCS participated in eight regional housing workshops in partnership with the Department of Land Conservation and Development, the League of Oregon Counties, and the Association of Oregon Counties to determine a productive, long-term strategy for collaboration. [The workshop report is available online.](#)

Energy Assistance KPM

Our energy bill payment assistance programs ensure that Oregonians are safe and warm in their homes. In the 2017 and 2018 fiscal years, we prevented 86,193 service disconnections and restored connection to 8,139 households with a total of \$105,190,639 in those fiscal years. Crisis payments include those that are for preventing disconnection of service or restoring service which was shut off. Preventing disconnections is more cost-efficient for OHCS than reconnecting power after disconnections. We have a concerted effort by the department to get prevention numbers up, which would in turn lower disconnections for low-income Oregonians.

We received \$61,252,286 of federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funds in those two years and \$43,938,353 of state funding by PGE and Pacific Power ratepayers. It's important to note that state funding is limited to the service areas of [PGE](#) and [Pacific Power](#).

Oregonians access this service through Community Action Agencies (CAAs). Sometimes they are referred by utilities or non-profits and some connect directly with the CAAs. Through our programs, CAAs provide direct payments to utilities on behalf of their clients, the average payment is \$379 across all of our programs. The maximum annual income for a household of four is \$43,511. However, the average annual income of households served is much lower at approximately \$15,500.

There are other programs in the state funded and delivered by electric and natural gas utilities that OHCS does not administer or oversee. Many Consumer Owner Utilities have programs to assist low-income ratepayers. OHCS compiled a [list](#) as a part of the [Low Income Utility Program Working Group](#).

Please let us know if we can provide any additional information. We look forward to listening to today's public testimony with you.

Sincerely,

Margaret Salazar
Oregon Housing and Community Services, Director