



## Senate Bill 1534: Fully Enforce Oregon's Fair Housing Laws

- We must address housing discrimination in Oregon and enforce our fair housing laws. Right now, people experiencing discrimination are suffering through a backlogged federal process. We can fix that by reinstating the state/federal partnership with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- Since ending the HUD partnership in 2015, Oregon has been unable to adequately enforce our Fair Housing Laws. We need to fill this gap between state and federal law. HUD has reached out to Oregon to reestablish this connection. Washington, Idaho, and California all have this partnership with HUD.
- A one-time startup investment of \$299,000 in this biennium will put this state back in partnership with HUD. Beginning next biennium, federal funds for cases of housing violations will cover 90% of the costs of increased enforcement; expected general fund cost in 2021-2023 is \$63,613.
- According to the Fair Housing Council of Oregon (FHCO), a December 2019 survey of Portland's rental housing market found more than one in four prospective renters were discriminated against because of their race, national origin or source of income as they searched for a home.
- With better enforcement, all Oregonians can have equal opportunities to find a home and businesses will be incentivized to have fair operating practices.

### BACKGROUND

State and local taxpayers have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in recent years to increase the amount of affordable housing that is being built and made available. Tens of thousands of new units won't make the difference Oregonians need if housing discrimination and systemic bias keep people from getting into homes.

Our state has a long and shameful history of racism and housing discrimination from our founding. Discrimination in housing – especially for people of color and people with disabilities – is unfortunately very real.

Oregon walked away from a state/federal partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to investigate certain instances of housing discrimination. This leaves many people experiencing discrimination to rely on a slow, backlogged, exclusively federal process. The Labor Commissioner believes Oregon should re-engage with the federal government to maximize our ability to enforce anti-discrimination laws.



## **WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN:**

- Ensure Oregonians' access to housing by reinstating Oregon Labor and Industries' ability to enforce federal housing discrimination claims by reestablishing "substantial equivalency," which means Oregon Labor and Industries is adequately empowered to enforce these laws by Oregon statute.
- Simple language change: SB 1534 will allow for reinstating the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) contract as of January 1, 2021.
- Small budget investment: \$299,000. If the legislature makes this (very) small startup investment, the federal government will pay \$2,900 per case in future biennia. This works out to a better federal match rate than Medicaid based on historical caseloads.
- HUD has a legally established role in this work and is able to reimburse Oregon Labor & Industries for discrimination cases it takes on. This federal statute is intended to be fee generating for states. HUD has reached out to Oregon to reestablish this connection.
- Fully delivering on the legislature's investment in increasing housing stock means making sure that people get access free of discrimination across the marketplace.