

HB 2100 -4 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Housing

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Meeting Dates: 3/2, 3/9, 4/13

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Housing and Community Services Department to study laws related to housing and to report findings to interim committee of Legislative Assembly no later than September 15, 2022.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Disproportionate representation among Black and Indigenous Oregonians experiencing homelessness
- Need for culturally specific providers with preexisting relationships with communities of color
- Benefits and challenges of local decision making on funding homeless services
- Concerns regarding long-term sustainability of Community Action Agencies if funding model changes
- Proposal for task force focused on funding structures that center racial equity in homeless services and address current grantee concerns
- Current grantee ability to disburse funding and programming while statutory changes are being resolved
- Collaborative proposal review process by department and local partners to determine and address regionally-specific needs
- Comparing grant program to similar models in other states

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-4 Replaces the measure. Authorizes the Housing and Community Services Department to administer federal anti-poverty programs with advice from the Housing Stability Council and requires department to distribute funds statewide, as determined by a needs-based and geographically-based formula.

Defines "culturally responsive organization", "culturally responsive service", and culturally specific organization" for the purpose of determining eligible entities for grants administered by the department. Directs department to administer the Emergency Housing Account to assist homeless individuals and individuals at risk of becoming homeless, including through the Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHA) and the State Homeless Assistance Program (SHAP). Requires department to consult with specified entities in the administration of grants for EHA and SHAP.

Requires that a successful grant application for EHA or SHAP funds demonstrate that the applicant is a culturally responsive organization or is engaged in a process to become a culturally responsive organization, and which engages with culturally specific organizations and local homelessness system planning efforts. Allows department to expend administrative funds to direct statewide policy on homelessness. Requires department to utilize outcome-oriented contracting processes and evidence-based and emerging practices in ending homelessness, including practices unique to rural communities, in program fund decision making and allocation. Requires that 25 percent of Emergency Housing Account funds be dedicated to assistance for veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Establishes the Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities, charged with identifying and proposing solutions to address racial disparities in the provision of and access to homeless services, including consideration of existing funding structure, contracting process, grantee eligibility and information dissemination and delivery of federal and state funds. Describes task force membership, structure and nominating entities. Directs department

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to staff task force and hire a third party facilitator to assist chair or co-chairs in task force meetings and operations. Provides, at the discretion of the department, compensation for travel and other expenses incurred by task force members while performing official duties. Requires task force to submit a report to the appropriate committee of the Legislative Assembly no later than January 15, 2022. Sunsets task force July 1, 2022.

Declares emergency, effective upon passage.

Minimal revenue impact; fiscal impact issued

BACKGROUND:

According to data provided by the National Council on Homelessness (2020), Oregon's rate of homeless individuals is one of the highest in the nation, with 15,876 individuals who are homeless on a given night, or an average of 37.9 per 10,000 people in the general population. According to Oregon Housing and Community Services, Oregon ranks 4th highest in the nation for youth experiencing homelessness and chronic homelessness. A 2019 study by the Oregon Community Foundation found that Black and Indigenous Oregonians are disproportionately represented in the homeless population, with a share of the homeless population that is more than three times higher than these groups' representation in the general population.

The health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as individuals and families displaced by last year's wildfires, underscores the need for safe shelter, housing and supportive services to meet the needs of a growing homeless population. The community action agency network, established initially under the federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, has served as Oregon's centralized delivery system for federal antipoverty programs, including services for individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. State and federal moneys for various housing stabilization programs flow through community action agencies, or CAAs, which have geographically-defined services areas throughout the state.

House Bill 2100-4 clarifies Oregon Housing and Community Services' role and responsibilities in administering federal anti-poverty programs, including the Emergency Housing Assistance Program and State Homeless Assistance Program. It requires the agency to consult with specified entities in grant administration, and clarifies that eligible grantees must demonstrate culturally responsive services to best serve the needs of diverse client populations, including communities of color. It establishes the Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities to address racial disparities in the provision of and access to homeless services programs across the state.