



ALEX CUYLER

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DATE: March 4, 2023
TO: Joint Ways and Means Committee, Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
FROM: Alex Cuyler, Lane County Intergovernmental Relations Manager
RE: SB 5511, relating to the financial administration of the Housing and Community Services Department

Dear Co-Chair Wood, Co-Chair Gomberg, Vice Chairs and Members of the Committee:

The OR Housing and Community Services budget is a vital piece of the efforts to reduce homelessness in Lane County and across the state. We write today with recommendations we believe will improve the Agency's effectiveness.

Their request for \$130M to develop Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and \$4.5M to establish a PSH risk mitigation fund is greatly needed to increase the number of PSH units available in Oregon. Numerous studies have shown PSH reduces health care and criminal justice costs as individuals stabilize in housing and no longer cycle through costly crisis systems^[1]. In one PSH program in Lane County, there was an overall estimated cost savings of \$526,885 for 51 residents after six months of living in PSH because of fewer interactions with the hospitals and jails.

Permanent Supportive Housing not only has financial and community benefits, it has lasting impacts on human lives. Jane, for instance, started working with an outreach program in 2019 when the team found her behind an alley soaked in urine. At the time she lost her Social Security, had no mailing address, she had no connection to medical providers in the community despite previously diagnosed with COPD, cardiac issues, edema, periods of lability, and continuing intermittent explosive disorder. Jane's outreach team support her to get into Permanent Supportive Housing in 2021. She has since been connected to a medical provider, cardiac specialists and attends her appointments regularly. She resides in her apartment community and has developed a friend network in her home. She reestablished connections with daughter and grandchildren and other family members. Her hygiene is excellent. Property management shares that her apartment continues to be a model example and is spotlessly clean and tidy. Jane no longer displays verbal aggression and is known for her sweet demeanor with her neighbors. She has found a sense of community in Permanent Supportive Housing and has found home. Jane's story is one of many that highlights the impact that Permanent Supportive Housing can have on our community members, including the hundreds of others in need this type of holistic and intensive supports.

As PSH units increase, a risk mitigation fund is imperative to make sure private landlords and housing authorities, governments and non-profits, acting as landlords, have the ability to be made whole when damage does occur. This fund will help

preserve partnerships and units for long-term use, recognizing the risk a landlord assumes when renting to anyone with high needs. Having a statewide PSH mitigation fund is an effective approach utilized in other states, including WA and CA. It is greatly needed in Oregon, especially as more and more PSH units come on-line and regions seek to meet the needs of those who are homeless with the very highest needs.

OHCS' Homelessness Response and Prevention Program deserves support. The Agency's proposal for \$73M to increase and sustain programming related to reducing homelessness would keep Lane County families in their homes. The COVID related Treasury Rent Assistance funding shone a bright light on the significant need across Lane County for ongoing homelessness prevention assistance. As rents continue to rise households need one-time and ongoing support to remain housed. This is an effective, cost efficient and stabilizing approach to reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness.

As a community with a Project Turnkey project and an expected 200 new emergency shelter beds due to the All In efforts, the \$24.1M to maintain shelter operations is a high priority. Sustained funding for shelter beds provides opportunities to focus on wraparound supports, strengthen connections with permanent housing providers and create long-term partnerships with systems of care.

Rapid re-housing is an integral and effective piece of the overall effort to move people who are experiencing homelessness to permanent housing. The Agency's proposal for \$172.2M in resources and long-term rent assistance would provide tangible opportunities for families and individuals to reduce their length of time homeless and realize permanent housing. In Lane County this approach is particularly successful with families, recognizing children and their need safe, stable spaces to call their own and engage in school.

Veterans have served our country and as a state we have an obligation to meet their needs to the greatest extent possible. The Agency's proposal for \$2.15M investment to support Veterans experiencing homelessness is one way to meet that obligation. Veteran homelessness programming is robust and many continue to fall through cracks. This funding will help to address those unique needs that arise and reduce the overall length of time a Veteran household experiences homelessness and is not engaged in programs they may be eligible to receive.

Overall the robust package provided by OR Housing and Community Services is drastically needs across the state and seeks to address concerns related to homelessness in Lane County and across the state. We urge support for this package.

ELECTRONICALLY SUBMITTED BY ALEX CUYLER, LANE COUNTY
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS MANAGER
