



# Senate Bill 893: Further Codifying OHCS Homeless Services Work & Funding System Shifts

## OHCS Homelessness Statutory Authority Shifts

In the last few biennia, OHCS' funding and work to address homelessness across the state has increased significantly. While the Oregon legislature has directed OHCS to engage in deeper work and has directed more funding to the agency, OHCS' fundamental statutory authority ([ORS 456.625](#)) has not kept up with our rapidly growing body of work.

By ensuring OHCS' statutory authority matches our expanded role with responding to the crisis of homelessness and housing instability, SB 893 will allow us to avoid delays and further clarify our role and scope of authority as well as streamlining our work.

**Senate Bill 893 would ensure that Oregon Housing & Community Services has clear, codified, statutory authority to engage in homelessness response and prevention work** by clarifying that the agency, and our partners, are able to invest in or administer:

- Fair housing training and outreach
- Investments that support low-income Oregonians to access housing and services
- The acquisition, construction, and operation of emergency shelters
- Homeless services system improvements such as capacity building, technical assistance and more
- Services designed to prevent evictions in Oregon
- Culturally responsive interventions designed to support individuals experiencing homelessness
- Programs and services designed to reduce poverty and aligned with Federal resources
- Education, services, and resources for people experiencing homelessness and low-income tenants

## Streamlining OHCS Grants & Contracts

**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.

## **Homeless Services Funding System Shifts**

In 2021, the HB 2100 Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities was formed and charged with investigating methods by which Oregon can decrease rates of racial disparity among people experiencing homelessness and receiving services, including enacting changes to who can advise the agency and how funding is distributed. Since producing their [original report in January 2022](#), the Task Force has been working to provide additional feedback and guidance on specific implementation pathways for their original set of recommendations. They have finalized and will release their final recommendations no later than the end of March 2022.

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 federally 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

This work will continue into future Session, guided by the Taskforce, but SB 893 marks a decisive step forward in addressing Oregon's homelessness crisis in a more equitable and holistic manner.

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