



**OREGON HOUSING *and*
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

725 SUMMER STREET NE, SUITE B | SALEM, OR 97301
503-986-2000 | www.oregon.gov/OHCS

March 6, 2024

Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair
Representative Paul Holvey, Co-Chair
Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-4048

Re: Senate Bill 1501

Co-Chairs Girod and Holvey and Members of the Committee:

My name is Leann Knapp, my pronouns are she/her and I am the Interim Assistant Director of Government Relations at Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS). We are before you today to provide an overview of, and express our support for, the technical changes to the Long-Term Rental Assistance Fund outlined in Senate Bill 1501.

I will first provide some background on the Fund. In the 2021 Long Session, the Legislature passed [House Bill 2163](#) which allocated \$4.5 million to OHCS to establish the Long-term Rental Assistance for Youth, or RAY, program supporting individuals younger than 25 years old transitioning out of:

- foster care;
- homelessness;
- a behavioral health or treatment facility; or
- a detention facility.

One of the critical interventions in this program was longer term rental assistance to support youth in reaching stability. Because those funds would need to be available beyond a single biennium to provide that longer term support, the Long-Term Rental Assistance Fund was established in OR 358.492. Since then, the sole use of that Fund has been to hold resources for that single program.

Fast forwarding to current day, OHCS been engaged in Oregon's Emergency Homelessness Response effort since January 10, 2023, when Governor Kotek declared a state of emergency around unsheltered homelessness through Executive Order 23-02.

In March of the 2023 Session the Legislature passed House Bill 5019, which allocated resources to support the emergency response effort with the express goals of:





OREGON HOUSING and COMMUNITY SERVICES

725 SUMMER STREET NE, SUITE B | SALEM, OR 97301
503-986-2000 | www.oregon.gov/OHCS

- Creating new shelter beds;
- Rehousing households experiencing unsheltered homelessness; and
- Preventing additional households from experiencing homelessness.

At the end of the 2023 Session the Legislature allocated resources to maintain the newly created shelter beds through the end of the biennium and support housing stability for the households rehoused under the effort.

The Legislature also set aside \$39 million in a Special Purpose Appropriation in Senate Bill 5506 to provide funding to local communities to rehouse additional households above and beyond their original goals, pending OHCS bringing forward and receiving Legislative approval of a framework for those resources.

OHCS brought forward our framework, which the Interim Joint Committee on Ways and Means approved, during January Legislative Days. In short, the framework proposed a statewide rehousing program that will provide needed services and supports to move Oregonians experiencing homelessness into housing. One of those critical supports is up to 24 months of rental assistance to support households with maintaining their housing stability.

That brings us to the small but important statutory change in SB 1501.

If a local community were to begin providing a rehoused individual or family with assistance starting tomorrow, and they needed a full 24 months of assistance, those funds would need to extend beyond the current biennium.

The change outlined in SB 1501 would make a slight shift the scope of the Long-Term Rental Assistance Fund to allow for funds beyond just OHCS' RAY Program to be deposited into the Fund. We anticipate a majority of the funds will be used in the 2023-25 biennium, but that flexibility to provide longer term support will prove critical for some households.

This small adjustment would create a clear and dedicated home for funds that will allow OHCS and communities statewide to build on the successes of the last year and rehouse more people experiencing homelessness.

We at OHCS would like to thank the Committee for your ongoing partnership and commitment to our state's homelessness crisis and support of OHCS' emergency response efforts.

We urge your support for SB 1501. I am happy to answer any questions.

