

# Director's Message



July 16, 2015

To our partners:

I write to share a final update on the 2015 legislative session with you. On July 6, the Legislature adjourned sine die, and there is much to celebrate for housing.

Without a doubt, there were more conversations and discussions about affordable housing this legislative session than in recent memory. More legislators deeply understand the need for affordable housing across Oregon, more legislators are interested in finding real solutions, and more legislators understand that we won't be able to improve graduation rates, improve health outcomes, or move forward as a state without more affordable housing for all our residents. Throughout the session, I had many conversations with legislators about the current situation low income Oregonians are facing, from rising rents, decreasing vacancy rates, increased screening criteria, to increased homelessness and instability.

With this increased awareness came increased interest, concern, and also investment.

## Increased investment

When it was all said and done, the legislature committed an additional \$62.5 million in bonds for affordable housing. This amount includes:

- \$40 million of general obligation, Article XI-Q bonds. These funds will be used to build new affordable housing for low income Oregonians. Because Article XI-Q bonds are a new funding source which has not yet been used for affordable housing, OHCS will be working with the Housing Stability Council to stand up two subcommittees to consider policy and financial structuring questions. Article XI-Q bonds require that the state take an ownership role in the financed property, so we will be carefully considering options.
- \$20 million of lottery backed bonds to provide housing for people with mental illnesses. OHCS will be working closely with the Oregon Health Authority as well as stakeholders to develop the implementation strategy for these funds.
- \$2.5 million of lottery backed bonds to preserve existing affordable housing. OHCS has successfully used lottery bonds several times to preserve existing affordable housing.

OHCS is committed to working with stakeholders and Legislators to successfully implement these new programs and funding sources. In the very near future, OHCS will be convening stakeholders and subcommittees to begin planning efforts.

## Policy Changes

There were several very important policy changes that took place during the legislative session:

- [HB 2442](#): This bill redesigns Oregon Housing and Community Services' governance system. It renames the State Housing Council to the Oregon Housing Stability Council, and increases its scope and responsibilities. This new Housing Stability Council will have a more comprehensive view of the agency. We worked closely with partners throughout the process



- to improve this bill and were able to present final consensus recommendations to the legislature. It becomes effective on January 1, 2016. (Read more about it in my [previous Director's Message](#).)
- [SB 244](#) is a program change bill which aligns eligibility criteria across two multifamily programs and will make them easier to use for staff and partners.
  - [HB 2171](#) was the final vehicle for tax credit sunset extensions. The Oregon Individual Development Account (IDA) Initiative was extended until 2022. The bill also expanded the purposes that low income Oregonians can save for to include things like first and last months' rent, vehicles, improving credit, paying down educational or medical debt, and more. It also included a change to the percentage of the state tax credit for donors. We are excited to work with partners to implement these new changes.
  - [SB 296](#) transfers the Elderly Rental Assistance program from the Department of Revenue to Oregon Housing and Community Services. The transfer won't occur until July 1, 2017, so in the meantime we will be working closely with the Department of Revenue, Community Action agencies, and others to help this transition go smoothly.

There were a number of other policy bills which will impact OHCS that passed during session including:

- [HB 2126](#), which extends the sunset on the Vertical Housing Development program until 2026.
- [HB 2547](#) will study housing with supportive services, and whether additional protections need to be in place for tenants to protect their privacy and rights.
- [HB 2629](#) provides one year notice to residents of Rural Development properties whose mortgages have matured meaning they may lose their rental subsidy.
- [HB 3016](#) is the Manufactured Home Park Landlord-Tenant Coalition bill. It makes a number of changes to landlord tenant law for manufactured home parks. It also increases the fee collected for the Manufactured Community Resource Center for both residents and park owners.
- [HB 3148](#) which will provide small amounts of assistance to low income Oregonians who have lost their homes due to wildfires.
- [HB 3257](#) which extends the sunset on the Oregon Energy Assistance Program until 2018.
- [SB 444](#) directs OHCS to submit a report in 2016 regarding housing stabilization and collaboration with OHA and DHS.
- [SB 969](#) which created a task force on housing and employment for people reentering society from prison.

Should you have any questions about any of these efforts, please do not hesitate to contact our legislative team: [Rem Nivens](#), Assistant Director for Public Affairs, who leads the effort, supported by [Alison McIntosh](#), Government Relations and Communications Liaison, as well as [Mike Boyer](#), Legislative Coordinator.

Please stay tuned to future Housing Council meetings and Director's Messages as we move forward with implementation of these new laws and programs. We will be increasing



communication particularly in regards to the increased investment and will be seeking your input and feedback.

All of us at OHCS, along with the State Housing Council, are truly excited by the increased investment in affordable housing and the additional policy changes. We look forward to implementing these critical programs and increasing opportunity for Oregonians with low incomes.

Best regards,



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