FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 22, 2020
Jenny Smith, 503-805-3853 / jenny.smith@state.or.us
Amy Vaught, Sen.ShemiaFagan@oregonlegislature.gov

Labor Commissioner, Senator announce 2020 bill to fully enforce housing discrimination

Housing discrimination is rampant in Oregon. Today statewide Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle and Senator Shemia Fagan announced a bill for the 2020 legislative session to increase enforcement of violations affecting people across the state.

“I want to see Oregon prioritize its enforcement of anti-discrimination laws. We can do a lot more to help people,” said Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle. “Currently, Oregonians that are discriminated against while they’re looking for a home are suffering through a backlogged federal process to file a complaint. It’s long past time to address housing discrimination and enforce our fair housing laws.”

Oregon has a long history of racism and discrimination. According to the Fair Housing Council of Oregon (FHCO), a survey of Portland’s rental housing market found more than one in four prospective renters were discriminated against because of their race, national origin or source of income as they searched for a home.

“FHCO’s report gave examples of rental agents giving different information based on the applicant’s race,” said SE Portland Senator Shemia Fagan. “White renters were told about move-in discounts and parking specials and contacted for follow up, but in many cases Black renters weren’t. Without full enforcement to stop discrimination, Oregon’s investments in affordable housing won’t be accessible to everyone.”

Senate Bill 1534 will increase enforcement of Fair Housing laws by reinstating the state-federal partnership with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a relationship that Oregon let lapse in 2015. A one-time startup investment of $299,000 in this biennium will put Oregon back in partnership with HUD. Beginning next biennium, federal funds for cases of housing violations will cover 90% of the costs of increased enforcement; expected general fund cost in 2021-2023 is $63,613.

“With better enforcement, all Oregonians can have equal opportunities to find a home,” said Hoyle.

###