



Presentation to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Human Services Subcommittee

Humanitarian Transition Project

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Agenda

- I. Context setting
- II. Efforts to transition the caseload
- III. Similarly situated individuals
- IV. Looking ahead
- V. Questions

Office of Strategic
Partnerships



A state where we all can thrive

We want **everyone in Oregon** to have the opportunity to reach their potential and contribute fully to the community.



New arrival services are essential



Oregon's shared prosperity relies on the contributions, leadership and creativity of people who come from all over the world.



But our **new arrival services infrastructure** isn't fully equipped to welcome these new neighbors.



As a result, many newly arriving **individuals and families** are left to drift, without the basic supports they need to successfully resettle.

People seeking asylum face additional barriers

People who have been granted an eligible immigration status and/or are arriving through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) are eligible to receive:

- Help securing housing
- Culturally specific meals
- Medical, food and cash benefits
- Authorization to work



Individuals and families who are in the process of seeking asylum are ineligible to work until after they have applied for asylum or Temporary Protected Status; they must also apply for employment authorization documents and receive approval.



Humanitarian response



In summer 2022 the Port of Portland contacted ODHS regarding individuals and families who were arriving from the nation's southern border and using the baggage claim area for shelter.

Governor Kate Brown directed ODHS to coordinate a humanitarian response in partnership with community-based organizations.

The response took the form of the Welcome Center, which opened in November 2022.

The Welcome Center's mission

ODHS contracted with Fortify Holdings for 125 rooms at one of its hotel properties, which in July 2023 **housed approximately 300 people**.

The department partnered with multiple community-based organizations (CBOs) to connect arriving individuals and families with **services and supports including:**

- Temporary shelter
- Immigration legal services
- Eligibility determination for federally funded programs
- Health care enrollment
- School enrollment for children ages three to 18
- Culturally specific meals
- Resource coordination



Senate Bill 5506 (2023)

Provided a pathway for those living at the Welcome Center to transition into community housing through a partnership between ODHS and Multnomah County Department of County Human Services (DCHS).

The **\$20.9 million investment** included:

- \$10.8 million General Fund for ODHS to continue Welcome Center shelter operations for nine months
- \$9.75 million General Fund for Multnomah County DCHS to move households into long-term community housing through partnerships with culturally specific organizations



ODHS – Multnomah County partnership

300




Households ineligible for refugee resettlement benefits would receive housing support, food, and legal and wrap-around services.

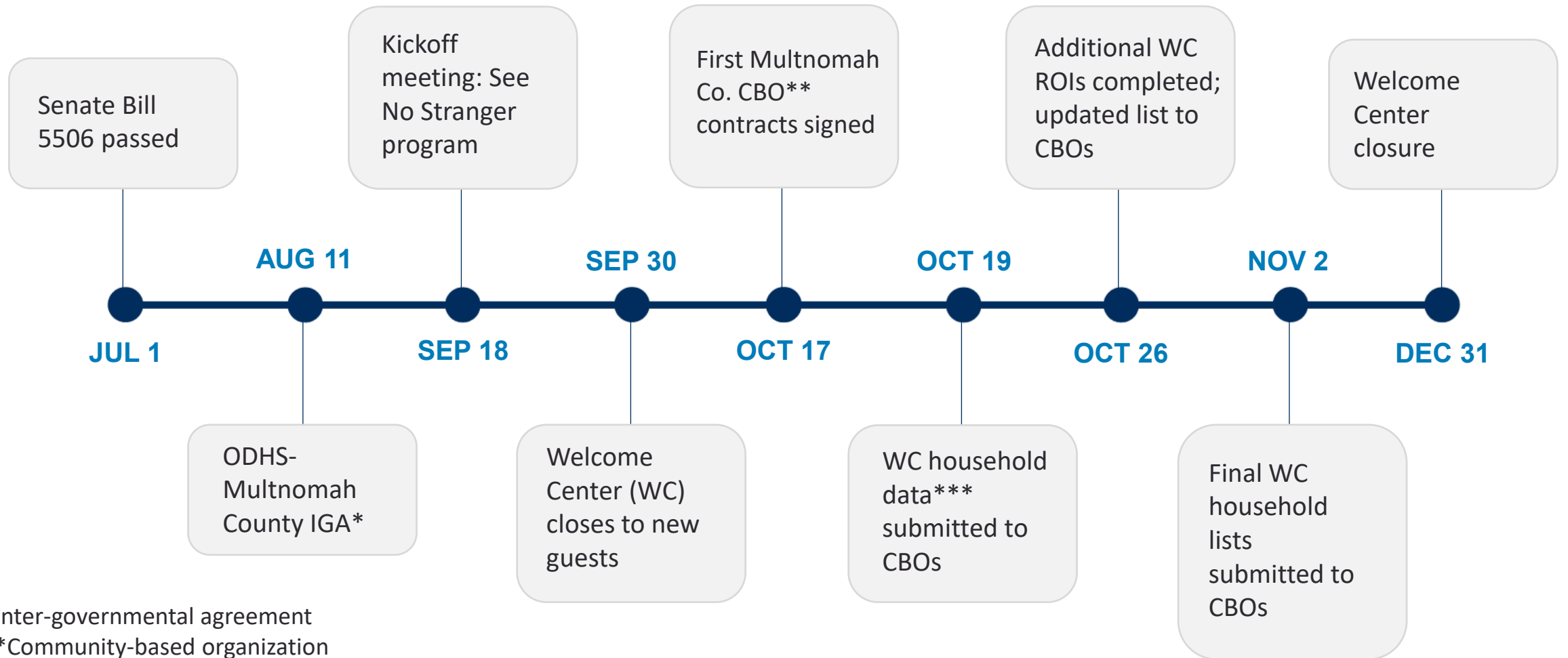
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Community-based organizations (CBOs) contracted with Multnomah County to establish the **See No Stranger** housing initiative and offer the needed supports.

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- Oregon/Southwest Washington African Community Development Center
 - Afghan Support Network
 - Portland Refugee Support Group

Transition project timeline: 2023



*Inter-governmental agreement

**Community-based organization

***Including only guests with completed ROIs

ODHS referrals to Multnomah County's CBO partners

300

Households



778

Individuals



Multnomah County's initiative

15-40

Hours of case management provided to each referred household through See No Stranger by Dec. 31, 2023.

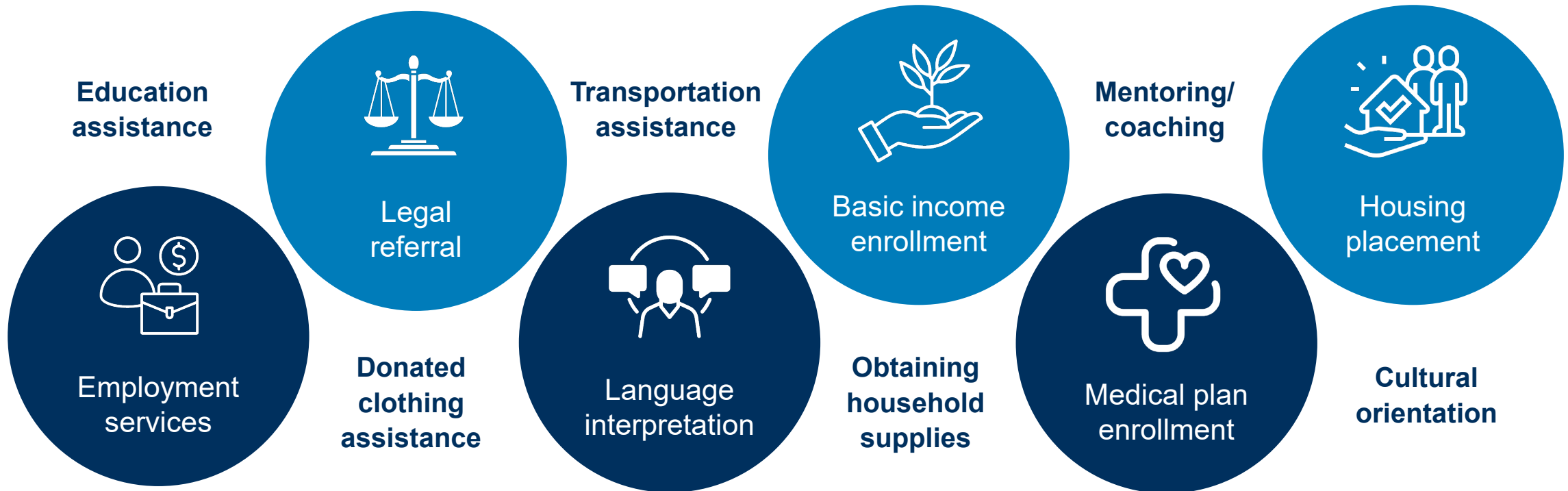
100%

Of the households had enrolled in basic income services as of Jan. 2024.



All data as reported to ODHS by Multnomah County.

Services and supports provided by Multnomah County's CBO partners



Similarly situated individuals

There is no formal mechanism for gathering data on people who arrive in Oregon seeking asylum.

ODHS can only provide a snapshot of this population, limited to those individuals who interacted with the Welcome Center but were not sheltered there.

Upon the closure of the Welcome Center to new guests, ODHS established a waitlist. That list, now called the Humanitarian Registry, provides some partial data:

As of December 31, the registry included

- **434 individuals**
- **232 households**
 - 89 family households
 - 143 single households



Ongoing gaps

The Welcome Center partially and temporarily addressed critical gaps in Oregon's system of services and supports for asylum seekers, particularly related to:

- Centralized access to services and supports
- Safe shelter
- Food access



Oregon's challenge

The absence of federal funding and infrastructure to support people arriving without benefits-eligible status is causing substantial hardship for members of this community.

Like other states, Oregon must continue to be creative and develop its own solutions.

The ODHS Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement continues to engage with federal partners on solutions.



Thank you





Questions?
