



Report to the 81st Legislative Assembly: Housing Choice Advisory Committee Report

January 31, 2021

In 2013, the Oregon Legislature passed [House Bill 2639](#), which expanded protections under Oregon housing discrimination law to people with federal U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Housing Choice Vouchers (also known as Section 8). The bill included federal, state, and local rental assistance as a protected source of income, thus preventing tenants from being denied residency solely based on their use of a voucher or other forms of rent assistance.

HB 2639 created the Housing Choice Advisory Committee (HCAC)¹, whose purpose is to:

- Advise the department with respect to matters of interest and concern regarding the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program²;
- Discuss and share best practices for maximizing participation by landlords and tenants in the Housing Choice Voucher Program; and
- Develop strategies and outcome measures for gauging the effectiveness of the Housing Choice Voucher Program

Progress

In 2019, the HCAC had begun to address how to better understand the challenges faced by the HCV Program. Oregon is in the top five nationally for the rates of chronic homelessness, unsheltered homelessness of families with children, and unsheltered rural homelessness. The shortage of affordable rental housing has had negative impacts across the housing spectrum from increased homelessness to a decrease in homeownership.

The impact for Housing Choice Voucher tenants is the increasing struggle to obtain and retain housing. For low-income tenants who do not have a Housing Choice Voucher, the challenge is even greater with many public housing authorities' waiting lists closed and wait times ranging from several months to several years³. There are currently over 41,000 people on wait lists for the Housing Voucher Program throughout the state and nearly 19,000 still waiting to be placed on a wait list. Once a household receives a voucher from the wait list, it takes an average of over two months to find suitable housing that meets fair market value limitations. Approximately 46%

¹ Appendix A – Housing Choice Advisory Committee Roster

² Appendix B – Housing Choice Voucher Program Overview

³ Appendix C – Public Housing Authority Annual Report



of households have to return their vouchers as they are unsuccessful in their search for permanent housing that meets the program criteria.

The HCAC is working to identify areas where participation in the HCV Program is a success and is addressing ways to share best practices. In 2020, HCAC members met with Public Housing Authorities to begin developing strategies on how best to meet their needs and address any impediments within the program's structure. Additional discussions included improving communication between PHAs and landlords and what type of training is needed and available to engage landlords in the program.

The Lane County Housing Authority, operating under the name Homes for Good, administers a Landlord Engagement Program. Operated mainly through the Landlord Liaison position, the program has received supportive feedback from landlords participating in the HCV program and is identified as a successful engagement strategy.

Outreach, education and training efforts continue to be provided by local landlord housing associations, while the Fair Housing Council of Oregon continues to educate landlords and tenants on the inclusion of source of income as a protected status in Oregon's non-discrimination law and the rights of tenants.

In November, 2020, the committee finalized their charter to identify their purpose and scope of work that aligns with HB 2639 and to chart their way to future efforts to fulfill the intent of the bill.

Next Steps

Next steps have been identified. They include:

- Continue outreach and education efforts to ensure that landlords and tenants are aware of HB 2639 (2013) requirements improve communication and engagement between PHAs and landlords.
- Continue to support enforcement and education to landlords through the Fair Housing Council of Oregon and other education partners.
- Continue discussions with the Public Housing Authorities regarding the challenges faced by the HCV Program and share best practices that could positively impact the use of Housing Choice Vouchers.

APPENDIX

Appendix A – Housing Choice Advisory Committee Roster

Appendix B – Housing Choice Voucher Program Overview

Appendix C – 2020 Oregon Public Housing Authorities Annual Report





Housing Choice Advisory Committee

Members –

Cara Carter, COO, Housing Authority of Jackson County

Deborah Imse, Executive Director, Multifamily NW

Jason Miller, Legislative Director, Oregon Rental Housing Association

Jill Smith, Director of Housing, Clackamas County Housing Authority

John Van Landingham, Attorney, Lane County Legal Aid

Pegge McGuire, Director of Housing and Energy Services, Community Services Consortium

Phil Owen, Legislative Committee Chair, Rental Housing Alliance of Oregon

Sybil Hebb (Becky Straus, alternate), Attorney, Oregon Law Center

Travis Baker, Landlord Liaison, Homes for Good

(As of November 9, 2020)

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Housing Choice Voucher Overview

What are housing choice vouchers?

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is the federal government’s major program for assisting very low-income families, elderly, and disabled households to afford decent, safe and sanitary housing in the private market. Since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the household, participants are able to find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses and apartments. Housing Choice Voucher holders are free to choose any housing that meets program requirements and does not limit the choice of housing to subsidized housing projects.

A household with a housing voucher is responsible for finding suitable housing where the owner agrees to rent under the Housing Choice Voucher Program. A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the public housing authority on behalf of the participating household. The household then pays the difference between actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program.

Housing choice vouchers are administered locally by public housing authorities through funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Oregon has 22 public housing authorities serving the state’s 36 counties.

Who is eligible to receive a housing choice voucher?

Eligibility for a housing choice voucher is determined by the public housing authority based on the total annual gross income and family size and is limited to US citizens and specified categories of non-citizens who have eligible immigration status. In general, a household’s income may not exceed 50% of the median income for the county or metropolitan area in which they choose to live. Voucher holders typically pay 30% of their income as their share of the rent with the remaining amount paid to the landlord by the public housing authority.



2020 OREGON PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITIES ANNUAL REPORT

PHA	Counties Served	# HC Vouchers	# VASH Vouchers	Success Rate of vouchers issued	# of Applicants unable to be added to Wait List	Avg Length of Time to use Voucher (days)	Length on Waiting List (years)	# on Waiting List
NE Oregon HA	Baker, Grant, Union, Willowa	789	28	46.0%	-	60	1.56	258
Linn-Benton HA	Benton, Linn	2,450	63	52.0%	-	75	2.00	2,450
Clackamas County HA	Clackamas	1,730	102	77.0%	2,849	47	3.00	696
NW Oregon HA	Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook	1,031	46	64.0%	-	68	1.00	1,235
Coos-Curry HA	Coos, Curry	649	51	27.0%	-	37	1.00	666
Housing Works	Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson	1,196	83	57.0%	-	90	1.00	2,400
Douglas County HA	Douglas	741	85	76.0%	-	60	2.00	2,227
HA of the County Umatilla	Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla, Wheeler	281	12	52.0%	-	68	1.24	439
HA of Malheur County	Harney, Malheur	363	0	40.0%	-	45	1.00	275
Mid-Columbia HA	Hood River, Sherman, Wasco	551	0	40.0%	-	70	1.00	519
HA of Jackson County	Jackson	2,311	214	60.0%	-	45	4.00	4,614
Josephine Housing & Community Dev. Council	Josephine	815	10	38.0%	-	66	0.86	5,890
Klamath HA	Klamath, Lake	860	70	40.0%	-	75	2.50	1,163
Homes for Good	Lane	2,784	207	74.0%	1,887	70	1.50	2,980
HA of Lincoln County	Lincoln	491	5	49.0%	-	75	0.90	826
Marion County HA	Marion	825	19	30.0%	-	90	2.00	3,042
HomeForward	Multnomah	10,288	621	83.0%	14,255	61	4.00	1,416
West Valley HA	Polk	593	2	36.0%	-	29	2.00	1,929
HA of the City of Salem	City Salem	2,931	65	62.0%	-	60	4.00	4,872
HA of Washington County	Washington	2,615	150	70.0%	-	88	5.00	856
HA of Yamhill County	Yamhill	1,340	24	68.0%	-	57	4.00	2,638
TOTALS		35,634	1,857	54.3%	18,991	63.62	2.17	41,391

*Success rate is defined as percent of issued vouchers that successfully result in a housing assistance payment (HAP) contract. For example, a PHA issues 100 vouchers. Of these 100 vouchers, 72 result in a HAP contract, and the remaining 28 are returned, unused, to the PHA. This would result in a success rate of 72 percent (72/100)

