



Jan. 20, 2022

Dear partners,

I share with mixed emotions the bittersweet news that I will be moving on from OHCS in early February. Last week, the White House announced that President Biden appointed me to serve as HUD regional administrator, serving Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska.

I am honored to be called upon to serve our nation in these unprecedented times to represent Oregonians' needs in this federal role. At the same time, it is hard to leave a community filled with talented and dedicated partners. We have done so much good work together over these past five years, including developing the state's first Statewide Housing Plan. This plan has guided our work, and even with the continued COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating wildfires, we have made steady progress toward our shared vision.

In my time with OHCS, 2021 was the most impactful year. We've disbursed nearly half a billion dollars in rental and utility assistance, preventing evictions and increasing housing stability for **more than 45,000 Oregon families**. We launched multiple emergency response programs, brought new manufactured homes to wildfire-impacted areas, expanded the supply of permanent supportive housing, passed legislation to modernize the state's homeless services policies with a focus on unsheltered homelessness and racial equity, and financed more affordable rental homes than any time in the agency's history. As I embark on new endeavors, I wanted to touch on just a few highlights of what we have collectively accomplished just in one year.

Leading with equity and racial justice: During the 2021 legislative session, we pushed for several bills, including HB 2100, that seeks to redesign and modernize the homeless services delivery system to ensure it better serves communities of color and other underserved groups by partnering with more culturally specific organizations. OHCS has also provided critical housing stability services to organizations that support Fair Housing, immigrants and refugees, culturally specific organizations, and others to ensure our investments go to those most impacted by the housing crisis. In our Affordable Rental Housing work, \$89,172,304 in subcontracts were awarded to minority-owned, woman-owned, or emerging small businesses (MWESB-certified businesses). We partnered with the Oregon Health Authority on intersectional health and housing partnerships for the second year, including investments in the Housing Is Our Health initiative. As we move forward with intention, we appreciate ideas, partnership, and feedback to continue centering and advancing this work.

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Partnering to build affordable housing: OHCS takes bold steps to weave together federal and state resources to provide financing for developing and preserving quality affordable housing. In 2021, the agency added funding commitments for 2,466 homes to our pipeline. These investments help address Oregon's severe housing shortage while ensuring thousands of additional Oregon families will have a safe, stable place to call home. This number puts us at **18,329** homes, or 73%, toward our goal of building a development pipeline of 25,000 homes within five years as laid out in the [Statewide Housing Plan!](#)

Wildfire disaster housing response and recovery: Communities impacted by the 2020 wildfires have been working tirelessly to bring residents safe and stable housing. OHCS convened the [Wildfire Disaster Housing Task Force](#) to respond to the housing needs of Oregon wildfire survivors, developing the [Disaster Housing Recovery Action Plan](#). Early in the recovery, OHCS financed the Gateway-Talent Urban Renewal Area Project, with more than \$1 million to purchase and place 53 travel trailers so families with kids in the district can be closer to home while rebuilding. Since that time, OHCS has partnered in advocating for additional resources for wildfire survivors. As a result, the Oregon Legislature allocated \$150 million to OHCS for housing-specific wildfire recovery. These critical funds support innovative local projects and are allowing OHCS to finance modular and manufactured housing efforts to site new and replacement homes in impacted counties. In November 2021, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) allocated \$466,286,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds to Oregon.

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Legislative advocacy: In 2021, OHCS testified to the Oregon Legislature and Congress and frequently engaged with legislative leadership in a historic legislative session, two emergency board sessions, and countless committee hearings. OHCS and housing advocates secured a record level of funding—more than \$1.96 billion—from the Oregon Legislature [for housing solutions in the regular session](#) and during the 2021 December Special Session. During the 2021 legislative session, we advanced new policy to increase housing options and support Oregonians in need, worked to expand access to OHCS funds, and improved policies to create a more inclusive Oregon. Federal policymakers' support continues to come in waves, most notably with the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). OHCS received over \$349 million to help support Oregon's most vulnerable, including funding for new programs such as \$90.9 million for the Homeownership Assistance Fund, \$6 million for Low-Income Home Water Assistance and \$1.6 million for housing stability counseling programs.

Community and stakeholder engagement: The agency partners with a wide array of community-based groups, nonprofit organizations, homeownership centers, developers, community action agencies, and governmental partners to serve homebuyers, renters, and populations experiencing homelessness and people in need of special-needs housing. Even though it was difficult not to be together in person, our partners gathered with us online to build community and advance shared goals. Together, we took part in 47 groundbreakings and openings (wearing masks), as well as with virtual conferences and town halls. We also hosted over 100 partner calls, webinars, and events. [The](#)

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receive community feedback, and set policy for the development and financing of affordable housing throughout Oregon. We also created new partnerships with the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, Unite Oregon, and multiple other community groups to ensure our outreach is responsive and intersectional, and to extend wraparound services beyond housing.



Building permanent supportive housing (PSH): With 915 homes funded, we're more than halfway to reaching our five-year target of 1,000 additional homes. That's 92% of the way to meeting our Statewide Housing Plan target. Recognizing the urgent need to provide supportive housing to individuals and families that have experienced chronic homelessness, we're building capacity to continue this work. Our second PSH Institute graduated in 2021, and we took part in the Keystone Project grand opening in Lane County with project sponsor Homes for Good and services provider ShelterCare. The Keystone was the first project designed and completed by OHCS' first Supportive Housing Institute graduates in 2020. The project is made up of 15 apartments that will provide homes and wrap-around services to families experiencing chronic homelessness in the city of Eugene. Our third cohort of new teams working to reduce barriers to supportive housing and develop PSH in their local communities will launch in 2022.

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Providing keys to homeownership: Last year was one of many new milestones. The first Local Innovation and Fast Track (LIFT) Homeownership projects were built and ready for sale to eligible homebuyers. These 48 homes, located in Bend, Newberg, Cottage Grove, Florence, Portland, and Philomath, were among the first awarded LIFT Homeownership projects. In 2021, we provided 434 loans to first-time homebuyers with the Oregon Bond Residential Loan Program. We received an award of \$1,681,331 from NeighborWorks America for the Housing Stability Counseling Program, which will be a critical source of support as we look to stabilize homeowners. We awarded 17 homeownership centers funding for the next five-plus years, including five culturally specific organizations. We're intentionally expanding access to homeownership, especially to communities of color and historically marginalized groups. Last year, 19 organizations disbursed \$2,292,041 in down-payment assistance funding to 162 households, including 26 veterans and 84 BIPOC households, helping reduce the homeownership gap.

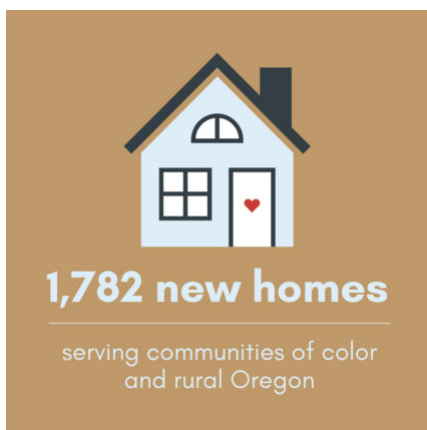


Redefining Veterans: With the help of our veteran stakeholders, the 2021 Legislature passed [House Bill 2094](#), which authorized OHCS to define “veteran” internally within administrative rule. This internal definition allowed our agency to remove access barriers to housing resources. (Formerly, some pregnant women, LGBTQ+ veterans, and other populations were unable to receive the benefits they fought for.) This last year, the second round of Emergency Solutions Grants – Coronavirus a

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veterans find homes. OHCS' Home Ownership Assistance Program has awarded \$1,522,800 to 13 organizations for down payment assistance, with up to \$15,000 per veteran who are first-time homebuyers and meet the income qualifications of below 100% area median income.

Keeping Oregonians housed: In working to prevent and reduce statewide poverty and homelessness, OHCS' Housing Stabilization Division set new records in distributing assistance to local communities to help Oregonians in need. In 2021, we distributed more than \$411.6 million in total rental assistance, including the Landlord Compensation Fund, Supporting Tenants Accessing Rental Relief (STARR) and the Oregon Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Last year, about 33,000 households had received help paying rent with OERAP funds during the 2021 calendar year. During a global pandemic, this funding provided a lifeline to those in need.



Tailoring programs to meet the needs of rural Oregon: In 2021, we had a record number of LIFT affordable rental housing projects in development across Oregon. The Oregon Legislature allocated an additional \$410 million in state funding to create affordable and permanent supportive housing. OHCS allocated \$129 million in Local Innovation Fast Track (LIFT) Rental funds, in addition to leveraging tax-exempt conduit bonds, and Federal 4% Low Income Housing Tax Credits to create 1,727 new affordable homes serving communities of color and rural communities. To help rural partners respond to the pandemic, we also provided capacity-building funds to smaller rural partners to help them operate their projects remotely. Earlier this year, the Housing Stability Council approved

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2020 Oregon wildfires. The new scoring system awards additional application points for projects in federally declared disaster areas, and 25% of all LIFT dollars this year will now be reserved for projects in areas impacted by the 2020 wildfires.

Ensuring Oregonians have safe shelter: OHCS granted \$10 million in “out of the cold” shelter funds to ensure Oregonians experiencing homelessness have a safe, dry place to come in from the cold. These contracts required local-level partnership with culturally specific organizations or Federally Recognized Tribal Governments. This ensures that communities of color and other over-represented groups have equitable access to the services they need. We also responded to new pandemic challenges by supporting shelters in providing services following recommended socially distant “non-congregate” ways to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 among some of Oregon’s most vulnerable populations.



As the incredible work of this agency moves forward, OHCS will continue implementing Statewide Housing Plan priorities to broaden the impact and strengthen the organization with a foundational focus centered on equity and racial justice. There are undoubtedly more challenges ahead, but there's also much to be excited about in the innovative work happening to keep Oregonians safely and affordably housed while building thriving and inclusive communities.

Thousands of Oregonians of low and moderate incomes have access to a safe, dry place to call home because of our collective work. I'm humbled to have partnered with such extraordinary partners and look forward to seeing OHCS thrive. I am also proud to have led the incredible and dedicated staff at OHCS who will continue and, no doubt, expand on this work and do great things. [Andrea Bell will step in as acting director](#) in February to ensure the agency continues to deliver results. Thank you for all you do.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MSL", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Margaret Salazar
Executive Director

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