

# Building Legislative Momentum

## **Oregon Housing and Community Services**

Legislative Advocacy: State Advocacy

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**NCSHA Award Nomination form:**

**HFA Name:** Oregon Housing and Community Services

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**Entry Title:** Building Legislative Momentum

**Category and SubCategory:** Legislative Advocacy, State Advocacy

**Entry Summary:**

Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS), led by Executive Director Margaret Salazar, has garnered unprecedented support from the Governor's Office and State Legislature to invest in new programs, and historic levels of funding for existing programs, which support low-income housing and poverty alleviation programs. OHCS' strategic approach to engagement, advocacy and communications has resulted in over \$300 million in new state funding for affordable housing and homeless services over the past two years; with Governor Brown's 2019-2021 Agency Request Budget at historic levels, exceeding \$400 million.

**Public Communications:**

Shortly after coming to OHCS, Director Salazar appointed a new Assistant Director of Public Affairs, Kenny LaPoint. Together, they created a vision for garnering the Oregon Legislature and Governor's support for new housing and service funding to help address the state's housing crisis. Since then the Agency has launched a number of strategic communication campaigns, maximized its social media presence and created tools for legislative advocacy. This includes convening regular statewide communications and messaging calls, developing and utilizing coordinated marketing tools and hosting weekly legislative update calls throughout legislative session. OHCS has unified the affordable housing industry, instilling the confidence and trust needed for the Oregon Legislature to invest in the work of the Agency. Aligning the voices and messages of partner housing agencies, advocacy organizations and cross sector partners has played a critical role in the success of OHCS' legislative agenda.

**Legislative Communications:**

OHCS Leadership regularly meets with State Legislators and the Governor to discuss the top priorities of the Agency. In addition, OHCS' Legislative Team has led convening's with housing advocates and partner organizations to assist in the development of the OHCS legislative agenda. The data gathering and outreach efforts related to the Statewide Housing Plan, has also given credibility and clarity to the messages regarding the historic need in our communities. The Public Affairs Divisions has been intentional in connecting legislators to the affordable housing communities financed and developed in their districts – inviting them to ground breakings and grand opening celebrations.

**Historic Investment:**

As a result of OHCS' legislative advocacy the Agency has been funded at historic levels over the past three years. Notable investments include:

Local Innovation and Fast Track (LIFT) housing funding –\$80 million (2017-2019 biennium)

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Increase in Document Recording Fee – \$90 million (on-going biennial funding)

Emergency Housing Assistance-\$50 million (2017-2019 biennium)

Housing Preservation-\$25 million (2017-2019 biennium)

Finally, going into the 2019 Legislative session, OHCS initially requested approximately \$270M in funding, and 40 new staff positions. The Governor's recommended budget is now asking the Legislature for just over \$400 million and 60 permanent positions. This represents significant funding increases and almost a 40% increase in Agency staffing.

**Media and Links:**

Governor Brown's Housing Policy Agenda (dated August 30, 2018):

<https://www.oregon.gov/gov/policy/Documents/Housing%20Agenda%20FINAL.pdf>

2019 OHCS Legislative Agenda Document: <https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/DO/02-01-2019-OHCS-Leg-Agenda.pdf>

Oregon Statewide Housing Plan full version: <https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/DO/shp/SWHP-Full-Plan.pdf>

Oregon Statewide Housing Plan Executive Summary: <https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/DO/shp/SWHP-Executive-Summary.pdf>