



Housing is the Centerpiece of Opportunity Section 8 "Housing Choice" Vouchers

HB 2639

Background

Stable, safe, and affordable housing gives people an opportunity to build better lives. The housing choice voucher program (also known as "Section 8") is a federally funded program administered through housing authorities statewide. A voucher will make up the difference between the price of rent and what the person can afford to pay. This is the biggest tool we have to address housing needs in Oregon, serving 32,000 households statewide each year.

With Housing Choice vouchers people with low incomes can make choices and take action to maximize their opportunity for success. The program, when it works, helps households achieve housing stability in neighborhoods near good schools, employment opportunities, and transit. And landlords are assured of a steady rental income.

The Problem

Currently, the Housing Choice Voucher Program is not achieving its goals. Too many tenants with housing vouchers struggle to find places where their vouchers will be accepted, and landlords remain reluctant to participate. As a result, families have fewer choices and face barriers to success. When vouchers are not accepted, the important public purpose of the housing assistance program is undermined, and the stability of low-income families is threatened.

The Solution

HB 2639 would remove barriers that currently make it difficult for tenants with Housing Choice vouchers to rent housing in their preferred communities. HB 2639 balances the needs of tenants, landlords, housing authorities and communities. The bill has multiple components to ensure that the program works for all parties. The bill would:

Develop statewide strategies to support tenants and landlords going through the leasing process, and ensure success through ongoing dialogue between parties;

Amend ORS 659A.421 (1)(d) and (2)(a) to clarify that receipt of federal rent subsidies and other housing assistance - in particular Section 8 vouchers - is not grounds for denying tenancy. Landlords would still be allowed to screen tenants as usual;

Require pursuit of a waiver from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to help increase flexibility and streamline processes including inspections to better serve landlords and tenants;

Create a flexible funding pool to help more tenants seeking housing, including domestic violence survivors, veterans, and others with histories of homelessness;

Fund a risk mitigation pool for landlords, to ensure that landlords have recourse for costs incurred.

Support HB 2639

Ensure success for tenants, landlords, housing authorities, and communities.

