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# Saluting Martin Luther King Jr.

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# Washington County Exceeds Goals for Shelter Creation



Kathryn Harrington

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my emergency order,” Governor Tina Kotek said. “I am inspired by the progress they have made, and it sends a clear message that if we work together, Oregon can be a place where everyone has a safe place to live.”

This work would not be possible without the steadfast leadership from the Washington County Board of Commissioners, who championed shelter expansion. Washington County Chair Kathryn Harrington shared, “It seems like yesterday we were rolling up our sleeves to deliver on the ambitious goals laid out in the emergency order. In our local communities, we see the urgency of this crisis every day, and having the support from our state and local partners has been crucial. As we enter the new year, I am grateful that almost 800 community members have a safe place to call home because of this initiative.”

Washington County’s Homeless Services Division serves as a Continuum of Care (CoC) agency and received almost \$8 million in state funding for the Executive Order work. Staff spent the last year developing and expanding housing solutions for people experiencing homelessness while integrating this work seamlessly with other long-term housing programs primarily funded through the regional Supportive Housing Services measure. EO 23-02 provided the impetus for a specific focus on serving people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

With this focus in mind, Washington County extended operations year-round for 150 beds, opened an additional 30

shelter pods, and have another 30 shelter pods slated to open in February 2024, greatly exceeding the original goal of 61 shelter beds set through the EO. Most recently, we celebrated the grand opening of Safe Rest Pods on SW 17th Avenue with our partners from the City of Hillsboro and shelter operator Open Door Housing Works on December 8, 2023.

As Washington County expanded shelter, the ultimate goal remains connecting people experiencing homelessness to long-term, stable housing. Washington County exceeded our rehousing goal and helped 156 households transition into much needed stable housing using EO 23-02 resources and a total of 542 households with other funding during the emergency period. Early efforts to achieve this goal focused on collaboration with street outreach teams and jurisdictional partners, who increased engagement with unsheltered individuals and addressed system barriers and service gaps, to connect people to shelter and housing as quickly as possible.

Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) and the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) were instrumental in supporting Washington County. At the same time, Washington County leveraged partnerships with City jurisdictions, Metro, libraries, law enforcement, and community-based service providers. The outcomes achieved over the last nine months would not have been possible without partnership across multiple levels of government and our service provider network.