

Evictions

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Northwest to provide free mediation services for landlords and tenants locked in disputes that might traditionally lead to eviction filings. The vote comes a few months before an anticipated flood of evictions this summer, when the state’s COVID-19 eviction moratorium expires.

During its pilot phase, the landlord-tenant mediation program would provide somewhere between 70 and 100 mediations for Portlanders at risk of losing their housing, according to city documents. Resolutions Northwest estimates 70% of these mediations will be successful, according to Christina Dirks, the policy and program coordinator for the Portland’s housing bureau.

The program would also make \$70,000 avail-

able for financial assistance as part of mediation. Most of these payments would likely be for back rent, but could be used for any payments agreed to by both parties during mediation, including missed utility payments or property damage.

During a Council meeting Wednesday, Commissioner Dan Ryan, who oversees the city’s housing bureau, said the program was “urgently needed” by both renters and landlords.

But Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty sounded a note of caution about the impact the small pilot could have, calling a hundred mediations “a drop in the bucket” compared to the thousands of people who would soon be headed to court when the moratorium expired.



PHOTO BY ODOT

Wyden Checks on Fire Debris Cleanup

Senator Ron Wyden, FEMA and Jackson County leadership and the DMTF/Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) toured the Totem Pole Mobile Home Park in Jackson County to reflect on the swift progress being made, learn about a future short-term housing site for wildfire survivors and to see how debris removal work is supporting the rebuilding of local communities.

Housing

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the funding through contracts with nonprofit and private organizations.

Critics say the system is archaic and unnecessary gatekeeping.

“To privilege dominant culture providers with the exception of one culturally specific provider is unacceptable tokenism,” Shannon Singleton, Gov. Kate Brown’s director of equity and racial justice and her housing policy advisor, said in support of the bill during a public hearing last month.

For smaller, culturally specific agencies, the current system has led to missed opportunities in the form of hundreds of millions of dollars, according to Katrina Holland, executive director of the nonprofit JOIN.

“We have heard stories where an agency who’s interested in providing services in a jurisdiction finds out they have to go to the community action agency and either doesn’t even know who their community action agency is or just does not have any relationship,” Holland told The Skanner. “So some folks are successful, and they’re able to develop a partnership with the CAAs and get some funding, and then others

are not.”

Requests for proposals (RFPs) issued are issued at CAAs’ discretion, and where available, might only open up every five years. Some organizations find

“It’s a bit circular when you think about it

workarounds by subcontracting with other organizations that have agreements in place with the CAA, Holland said – but that means diluted funding.

Under current statute, CAAs are in no way required to work with diverse organizations.

In the process of reform, many culturally specific organizations declined to speak on the record about their frustrations in trying to partner with CAAs. Many described the power differential at play: Should HB 2100 fail, these organizations worried they could jeopardize their funding opportunities with CAAs by criticizing them.

‘Echo Chamber’ Effect

State statute also bars the Oregon

Housing and Community Services Department (OHCS) from receiving advice from anybody outside of the Community Action Partnership of Oregon.

OHCS Executive Director Margaret Salazar took issue with what she described as the insular structure of funding and recommendations currently in place.

“Currently in statute, the Community Action Partnership of Oregon is the only named entity who is able to provide advice to OHCS,” Salazar said during a March public hearing on the bill. It’s a bit circular when you think about it. It’s a closed system. That one network has the sole authority to advise OHCS its funder, and in turn OHCS is only able to fund that network.”

Holland told *The Skanner* that similar reforms have been attempted before by previous OHCS directors, but had gained more traction at a time when Oregon was forced to reexamine its deep-seated, often racist, public policies.

“What we’re trying to say at JOIN and the Urban League and the Reimagine Oregon project is the reason (the bill)

is part of the agenda is it shouldn’t be illegal for smaller organizations, or organizations period, to contract with the state for these resources,” Holland said. “And unfortunately, thanks to the statute, that is the case. Not only is it illegal, but under the current statute, nobody can advise on how to spend those funds except the Community Action Partnership of Oregon.”

Importance of Lived Expertise

Oregonians who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) are disproportionately impacted by poverty and houselessness. When culturally specific housing organizations miss out on support, members of the BIPOC community often struggle to work with White-dominant service providers.

“It’s important for there be programs that are actually driven by the folks closest to the population, who can really provide culturally specific services, provide the opportunity for folks to get help in the language that they speak, or within their traditions,” Marisa Espinoza, public policy coordinator of the

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Guilty

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“This is a success, but there are so many more unjust murders that still need reckoning, that we still need to address,” said Princess Blanding, a Virginia gubernatorial candidate whose brother was killed by Richmond police. Marcus-David Peters, who was Black, was fatally shot by a Black police officer during a mental health crisis after he ran naked onto an interstate highway and charged at the officer.

In Columbus, Bryant had been swinging a knife wildly at another girl or woman pinned against a car when the officer fired after shouting at the girl to get down, according to police and body camera video released within hours of the shooting. The mayor mourned the 16-year-old’s death but said the officer had acted to protect someone else.

Kimberly Shepherd, who lives in the neighborhood where Bryant was killed, had been celebrating the guilty verdict in Floyd’s killing when she heard the

news about the teenager.

“We were happy about the verdict. But you couldn’t even enjoy that,” Shepherd said.

“This is a success, but there are so many more unjust murders

herd said. “Because as you’re getting one phone call that he was guilty, I’m getting the next phone call that this is happening in my neighborhood.”

In Chauvin’s case, by contrast, cell-phone video seen around the world showed the white officer pressing his knee to the Black man’s neck for more than nine minutes as Floyd gasped for air. It sparked protests across the U.S., and Chauvin’s fellow officers took the extraordinary step of testifying against him.

“As we look to future prosecution, the question is going to be: Is this perhaps the beginning of a new era, where those walls of silence are not impenetrable?” said Miriam Krinsky, a former federal prosecutor and executive director of the reform-minded group Fair and Just Prosecution. Chauvin’s case could also make future juries more skeptical of police, she said.

The day after Bryant was fatally shot, at least two other people were also killed by police in the United States.

On Wednesday morning, an officer killed a man while executing a search warrant in eastern North Carolina. And in the San Diego suburb of Escondido, police said an officer fatally shot a man who was apparently striking cars with a metal pole.

On Thursday, a funeral will be held for Daunte Wright, a 20-year-old Black motorist who was shot during a traffic stop earlier this month in Brooklyn



AP PHOTO/MORRY GASH

Frederick King listens to a speaker at a rally Monday, April 19, 2021, in Minneapolis as the murder trial against the former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin in the killing of George Floyd advances to jury deliberations.

Center, Minnesota, just a few miles from the courthouse as the Chauvin trial unfolded. In Chicago last month, 13-year-old Adam Toledo was fatally shot less than a second after he tossed a gun and began raising his hands as an officer had commanded.