

Oregon Housing and Community Services Department



Legislature Update

February 12, 2009

Lisa Joyce
Legislative Relations Manager



For More Information

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State legislators want to hear from Oregonians before they start cutting some \$800 million from state agency budgets over the next five months.

The proposed reductions are "about far more than dollars and cents. They're about real people who depend on crucial services as part of their everyday lives," said **Sen. Margaret Carter** (D-Portland), co-chair with **Rep. Peter Buckley** (D-Ashland) of the State Legislature's Joint Ways and Means Committee.

"It's only by hearing from these people that the committee will be able to understand the true gravity of the decisions that lie ahead," Carter said.

Buckley agreed, saying, "We want Oregonians to come forward with suggestions on how we grapple with these issues, as well as their concerns over the proposed cuts."

Testimony on proposed cuts will be heard at committee hearings slated for Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of this week. The hearings will begin at 4:30 p.m. and continue into the evening hours so that more Oregonians will be able to attend, Buckley said.

At each hearing, each participant will be given three minutes to testify, and will be asked to identify on a sign-in sheet if they are speaking as an individual or as part of a group or organization. The hearings, to be held in Hearing Room F, will focus on:

Tuesday – foster care system, senior citizen issues, the Oregon Health plan and other human service issues.

Wednesday – pre-kindergarten programs, K-12 schools, community colleges, the Oregon University system, and other education issues.

Thursday – issues on public safety, natural resources and all remaining agencies.

The committee will hear testimony from Oregon Housing and Community Services clients and partners on Thursday.

At the Legislature's request, OHCS identified 5 percent reductions in the agency's General Fund budget. The cuts included a \$204,880 reduction in the agency's Homeownership Assistance program, leaving 137 individuals without down-payment assistance.



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Among the other cuts the committee will consider: \$426,513 from the Emergency Housing Assistance program and \$184,456 to the State Homeless Assistance program budget. Together these two potential cuts will affect about 4,000 homeless individuals.

Other OHCS programs impacted by proposed budget cuts are: Housing Preservation, resulting in no preservation for about 53 units and \$6 million in subsidies lost over 20 years, and Community Incentive (Housing PLUS), with no impact on bonds and debt service to be paid with general funds.

"The agency has shaved off about \$2 million in funding to critical resources," said Rick Cramer, OHCS deputy director, "These cuts are sure to adversely impact many Oregonians who need housing and other critical services."

A full list of proposed cuts by agency can be found at <http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/lfo/>.

This week's hearings are the first step in the Legislature's plan for dealing with the current budget shortfall, work legislators must complete before they can craft the budget for 2009-2011.

To learn more about how the Ways and Means Committee will approach its job, click here to review its principles.

Joint Ways and Means Committee

Public Hearings on 2007-2009 budget reductions

Tue., Wed. and Thu. 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Hearing Room F, Oregon State Capitol

Testimony Guidelines

http://www.ohcs.oregon.gov/OHCS/news/pdf/Ways_Means_Public_Testimony_Guidelines.pdf

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