



PRESS RELEASE

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Press Contact:

Hannah Kurowski

hannah.kurowski@oregonlegislature.gov

Oregon's 2022 Legislative Session Closes with Major Investments to Respond to and Prevent Homelessness, Support Small Businesses, Working Families and Stronger Schools

Democrats passed policies to address homelessness, support working families and small businesses, drive down the cost of living, invest in community safety and violence prevention, and support stronger schools

SALEM, Ore. – Today Oregon House Democrats finished a successful 2022 session with major investments that will support small businesses, working families and low-wage individuals across every corner of the state. With the opportunity to invest funding from state revenues and federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars, the Legislature made critical and life-saving investments in Oregonians who need it most.

“We know that Oregonians have had a few tough years,” said [House Majority Leader Julie Fahey](#) (D-West Eugene/Junction City). “The work we accomplished this session will help us rebuild an economy that works for all Oregonians, not just the wealthiest of individuals and largest corporations, but our Main Street businesses and working families.”

Since the start of the pandemic, Oregonians have weathered disruptions to work schedules, schools, and child care. Many have struggled to make ends meet as the wealth gap has widened. To address this, Democrats focused their efforts around five priorities: **1)** urgently addressing the homelessness and affordable housing crisis; **2)** supporting working families and small businesses; **3)** driving down the cost of living; **4)** investing in community safety and violence prevention; and **5)** supporting stronger schools.

Responding to and Preventing Homelessness

Addressing the housing and homelessness crisis requires urgent, coordinated action. This session, House and Senate Democrats passed a housing package that includes a [\\$400 million investment](#) to address homelessness and connect people with shelter and critical services, build on investments to increase the supply of affordable housing, and keep Oregonians in affordable homes.

“It is our duty to address this crisis with urgency,” said [Representative Paul Evans](#) (D-Monmouth). “Success will depend on coordination between state and local governments and the flexibility for

local communities like Salem to execute a distinct, regional solution. I'm proud to support this multifaceted approach."

"Oregon needs to build more housing," said [Representative Mark Meek](#) (D-Clackamas County). "As a realtor, I know that too many families struggle with rising rents and home prices. With these investments, we can continue taking an active role in building more affordable housing to help bring down costs."

Democrats also passed [House Bill 4123](#), which will facilitate a coordinated response to homelessness by creating eight locally led pilot programs with counties, cities, tribes, and community organizations in the Mid-Willamette Valley, Eastern Oregon, Central Oregon, the Columbia Gorge, and in coastal communities. The pilot programs will help local communities leverage existing resources to better help people at risk of homelessness, while also connecting those in crisis with shelters and pathways to more permanent housing.

"These pilot programs will create a more equitable, accessible and responsive system by helping our local governments and community partners provide high-level coordination, centralizing communication, and strategic planning and implementation," said [Representative Jason Kropf](#) (D-Bend), chief sponsor of the bill.

Lastly, Democrats supported [creative housing solutions and wildfire recovery](#) for manufactured housing residents. House Bill 4064 will streamline local regulations on manufactured housing and clarify that Oregonians can place prefabricated homes in mobile home parks, breaking down a barrier for households impacted by the wildfires.

Stronger Schools

Our kids learn best when they are in safe, healthy classrooms five days a week. To help ensure students remain in these environments, Democrats approved a \$300 million investment to increase summer learning support and make our schools stronger by supporting educators facing extreme burnout.

"This is a first step to address a long-standing need," said [Representative Teresa Alonso Leon](#) (D-Woodburn), chair of the House Committee on Education. "The bill will provide important infrastructure and funding that will make a difference for this and next school year, but we are committed to finding more long-term solutions in future sessions so that our students and teachers can continue to be successful."

This investment will go towards [summer learning programs and activities](#) for K-12 students to keep them engaged and learning; [addressing the workforce shortage](#) to retain educators, school counselors, substitute teachers, mental health professionals and nurses; and supporting [school districts impacted by the wildfires](#).

"By investing in our education workforce, we can stabilize our schools and ensure our kids can thrive," said [Representative Courtney Neron](#) (D-Washington County/Wilsonville), vice chair of the House Committee on Education. "School employees have been moving mountains to support our students through the pandemic, and this bill will help alleviate the real challenges faced by teachers, staff and school administrators. This is the beginning of a longer conversation about how we can be responsive to the needs of our education system."

"School districts have been struggling to find new employees and retain educational workers who are simply burned out," said [Representative Zach Hudson](#) (D-Troutdale), a high school and community college educator. "I'm glad that this bill will get educators some immediate relief and break down bureaucratic barriers to hiring for our local schools."

Supporting Working Families and Small Businesses

Democrats are focused on building an economy that works for everyone. That's why this session, the Legislature supported over \$200 million in investments in career pathways and programs to retain and attract workers in critical sectors, including healthcare, behavioral health, education, manufacturing, technology, and construction.

In a bipartisan effort, Democrats championed a [\\$100 million investment](#) to help rebuild critical infrastructure in rural Oregon to support local economies and create jobs.

"These will be transformational investments to improve rural communities for generations and create hundreds of good paying jobs," [Representative David Gomberg](#) (D-Central Coast) said. "As our infrastructure ages, small towns are looking at big price tags to replace or repair water and sewer systems, bridges, and public buildings. Now with the state's help and federal dollars on the way, we can bring lasting change to rural communities across our state."

Democrats laid the groundwork for [expanded broadband access](#) by passing legislation to take advantage of a \$250 million investment from American Rescue Plan dollars and President Biden's bipartisan infrastructure law. The legislation will create a framework for future investments, strengthen state oversight and help develop broadband access at libraries across the state, which will help families and small businesses stay connected.

"Having access to quality broadband is no longer optional for Oregonians. We must take advantage of this golden opportunity to increase internet access in all of our communities," said [Representative Pam Marsh](#) (D-Southern Jackson County). "This bill prepares our state to make smart investments using the funds we expect from the federal government and is an important step towards a robust, sustainable and truly statewide broadband system."

In a historic moment, Democrats also approved House Bill 4002, [giving farmworkers overtime pay](#) after 80 years of exclusion. This will ensure farmworkers are fairly compensated for their work and help put hard earned money back into their pockets to help cover expenses like rent, healthcare and other essential needs.

"This is about fair pay and equal treatment under the law," said [Representative Andrea Salinas](#) (D-Lake Oswego), a chief sponsor of the bill. "Oregon's farmworkers are essential. Throughout the pandemic, wildfires, and heatwave this summer, they have put their safety and health on the line to make sure our families are fed and we have food in stores. I'm proud that we showed up for them."

Democrats also passed [House Bill 4015](#) to increase access to loans for small businesses from \$100,000 to \$1 million, allowing for greater investments in small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs across the state.

"This is going to help support and jumpstart small businesses and our workforces that are the backbone of our economy and the core of where our state's innovation lies," said [Representative John Lively](#) (D-Springfield), chair of the House Committee On Economic Recovery and Prosperity.

Driving Down the Cost of Living

For too many Oregonians, covering monthly and even daily expenses has become a challenge. That's why Democrats spearheaded a \$100 million investment to expand access to affordable child care and help [Oregon's child care workforce](#).

"As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, we must continue to build a system where every family can find care so our children have joyous, reliable, and meaningful early childhood experiences," said [Representative Karin Power](#) (D-Milwaukie), chief sponsor of the bill and chair of the House Committee on Early Childhood. "We can only reach this goal if child care providers and workers are adequately paid for their essential and difficult work. This is an important step towards that goal."

Democrats also [passed House Bill 4157](#), approving a \$600 one-time payment to a quarter of a million low-wage households who qualify for and utilize the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). This will help cover the cost of daily essentials like prescriptions, diapers and groceries. To see how this money will be distributed across the state, [click here](#).

“Right now many Oregonians, myself included, have been struggling to get by as the cost of living has skyrocketed,” said chief sponsor of the bill, [Representative Andrea Valderrama](#) (D-Portland). “Between these investments and a one-time payment for working Oregonians, we are helping to cover things like rent, child care, and utility bills.”

To maintain access to affordable health care for low-income Oregonians, Democrats advanced [House Bill 4035](#), which will stabilize health care coverage for approximately 300,000 Oregonians on the Oregon Health Plan after the end of the pandemic public health emergency.

“Thanks to federal support during the pandemic, we have seen more Oregonians insured than ever before,” said [Representative Rachel Prusak](#) (D-Tualatin/West Linn), chair of the House Committee on Health Care. “We are putting robust plans in place so we minimize health care disruption to low-income Oregonians and come out the other side of COVID-19 with a stronger health insurance system.”

Investing in Community Safety and Violence Prevention

Everyone deserves to be safe in their communities. Meeting that vision will require investments in proven solutions that reduce and prevent violence, while fostering safe communities built on trust.

This session Democrats [made targeted investments](#) in community-based violence prevention programs that will help address the root of the problem and reduce crime, providing funding to programs that will stop the cycle of violence. Democrats also passed [House Bill 4075](#), making it easier for victims of crime, including small businesses, to seek restitution and be repaid for economic damages.

“One of my top priorities is public safety, and this builds off of the work we’ve done to invest in gun violence prevention programs last session,” said [Representative Ricki Ruiz](#) (D-Gresham). “These are proven, human-centered solutions that will help local community organizations, partners, and coalitions who know their communities best address and curb the rising violence we’re seeing across the state.”

"As a nurse, I see the impacts violence has on our communities," said [Representative Travis Nelson](#) (D-Portland). "These investments in evidence-based intervention will be critical to interrupting this cycle of violence."

The Legislature also passed [Senate Bill 1510](#) to reduce traffic stops for infractions like broken tail lights that aren't dangerous, so law enforcement can focus on stopping serious and violent crimes.

“This bill is based on the value that everyone deserves to feel safe in their neighborhood,” said [Rep. Janelle Bynum](#) (D-Clackamas), chair of the House Committee on Judiciary. “By ensuring law enforcement can focus on serious crime and taking proven steps to reduce recidivism, we can build a public safety system that promotes equitable treatment and protects every Oregonian.”

With the close of the session, Democrats will spend the next several months meeting with their communities, continuing to solve problems for constituents, and working toward future legislation that meets the needs of all Oregonians.

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