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Oregon House Streamlines Path for Emergency Shelters

HB 2006 will help local communities provide critical assistance to struggling Oregonians

SALEM, OR— The COVID pandemic, recession, and devastating wildfires have worsened Oregon’s existing housing crisis over the past year, leaving thousands of Oregonians and their families with few places to turn. [House Bill 2006](#), which passed the Oregon House this evening, will help local communities provide emergency shelter in a time of great need.

“The Oregon Legislature has recognized that our housing crisis is an emergency, and we’ve taken bold steps to address it,” said House Speaker Tina Kotek (D-Portland), the bill’s chief sponsor. “Unfortunately, too many cities and towns still have had difficulty establishing locations for shelters due to complicated red tape. Those delays can cost people their lives, especially in the winter months. This bill will reduce many of these process barriers so we can get people into shelter quicker.”

On a temporary basis, House Bill 2006 will give local governments more flexibility in siting emergency shelters to assist unhoused Oregonians. Shelters would still have to comply with applicable building codes, have adequate transportation access, and not pose any identifiable public health or safety concerns for the people being served.

In 2019, the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department found that 64 percent of the nearly 16,000 people experiencing homelessness in Oregon were living in unsheltered locations, meaning more than 10,000 individuals are estimated to be sleeping outside on any given night. The agency also calculated a shortfall of 5,800 emergency shelter beds for individuals and families.

Bold action is required to address Oregon’s housing crisis, and House Bill 2006 is part of a broader [agenda](#) to increase affordable housing, address homelessness, and support homeownership.

Last week, the Oregon House unanimously passed [House Bill 5042](#), which includes \$18 million for low-barrier emergency shelters in Eugene, Salem, Bend, Medford, McMinnville, and Roseburg. These facilities, known as navigation centers, will be open seven days per week to connect homeless individuals and families with health care, housing, and public benefits.

House Bill 2006, which passed 54 to 4, now goes to the Oregon Senate for consideration.

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