

 OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

REBUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

HOUSE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS AGENDA

2023





Over the last few years, Oregonians have come together to tackle many challenges. These economic, educational, and social disruptions have had a disproportionate impact on low-income families, small businesses, veterans, and communities of color. Oregonians in every corner of the state are looking to move forward and make progress on the issues impacting our communities.

This document is a starting point for our long-term vision for Oregon's future. That vision includes a robust and fair economy that lifts up our homegrown industries and small businesses in every community, ensures that everyone has a place to call home, supports every worker's right to organize, and creates vibrant neighborhoods where every resident can prosper and feel safe. This work is ongoing, and begins anew with the 2023 legislative session.

With new leadership in the Governor's office, as well as new legislative leadership, we have the opportunity to fix what's broken, ensure that our investments are fulfilling their promises, and hold our state agencies and schools accountable. In collaboration with the new Governor, the legislature will improve oversight of our government, focusing on increasing accountability and effectiveness of the programs Oregonians depend on. Over the past several sessions, House Democrats have made big investments in Oregon communities; now we must ensure that these programs are working effectively.

By working together—across chambers, across parties, and across communities—we can use this session to regroup and rebuild for the future in a way that's in line with our shared values as Oregonians. The priorities below are presented as separate issues, but they are all interdependent and interrelated in building the kinds of future communities and economies we all want to see.

AT A GLANCE



Housing: Removing barriers to construction to address our shortage of 100,000+ housing units; protecting those facing eviction or foreclosure



Homelessness: Working with local governments and investing in programs that work to get people off the streets, connected to services, and in stable housing



Behavioral Health: Addressing the workforce shortage, increasing residential treatment facilities, and ensuring that agencies are rolling out programs effectively



The Economy: Supporting the semiconductor industry, boosting local economies, addressing workforce shortages, and championing workers' rights



Schools: Ensuring that investments are having a real impact in our classrooms; supporting students whose needs weren't met during the pandemic



Safe Communities: Holding people accountable for their actions; investing more in resources for solutions proven to prevent crime and keep us safe

Other Focus Areas: Protecting access to reproductive health, strengthening our democracy, and climate

AFFORDABLE HOUSING



The Challenge

Like much of the rest of the country, Oregon is in a housing affordability crisis. Recent estimates have shown that Oregon is more than 100,000 housing units short of what is needed. We simply do not have enough homes to meet the need for our current residents, let alone those who will move here in future years. The result is skyrocketing housing costs that are pricing families out of their homes and exacerbating our homelessness crisis.

Our Plan

Meeting the housing shortfall will involve short-, medium-, and long-term solutions. In this session, Democrats will take the lead on bold, evidence-based reforms and investments that will dramatically increase our housing supply over the next decade. We also need to ensure that we're protecting access to existing affordable housing units, so that vulnerable renters aren't pushed out into the streets, as well as increasing access to homeownership opportunities, particularly for marginalized and underserved communities.

HOMELESSNESS



The Challenge

Every county in the state is grappling with a rise in homelessness due to out-of-control housing costs, housing scarcity, a lack of access to substance abuse and mental health supports, and limited shelter options. This crisis manifests in many ways, including people living on the streets, in temporary shelters, or in cars or RVs, as well as families and children in unstable housing situations.

Our Plan

We will work closely with local governments and service providers to bolster programs that are working, repair or shutter those that aren't, and find innovative solutions to this crisis. This will require partnerships across programs that address housing, addiction treatment, mental health, job training, neighborhood cleanup work, and more. House Democrats will require accountability and transparency for how state funds are spent by local governments.

ADDICTION TREATMENT & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



The Challenge

For too long Oregon has lagged behind other states on access to behavioral health and addiction treatment. The opioid/fentanyl and meth addiction crisis is destroying lives, tearing families apart, and contributing to the rise in property crime and homelessness. In many cases, a lack of access to affordable housing or quality healthcare leads to self-medication, which can spiral into addiction. With voters' passage of Measure 110 in 2020, Oregon is shifting away from criminalizing drug use, but our treatment and support systems have not yet caught up to meet the need. As with so many of the major issues facing Oregon in 2023, workforce challenges are impeding our ability to make progress.

Our Plan

This session, we'll work to bolster the recruitment and retention of behavioral health workers; partner with local communities on effective, proven programs and provide more funding to those that work; stand up more residential treatment options; implement Measure 110 programs; fix our patient flow challenges at the State Hospital in Salem and Junction City; and hold state agencies accountable for the glacial pace of their program rollouts.

COMMUNITY SAFETY



The Challenge

After years of historically low crime rates, events of the last few years have destabilized many of the social and economic underpinnings of both public safety and our perception of it in too many of our neighborhoods and schools. While gun violence in Portland has risen, the good news is that the state's homicide rate is below the national average and property and violent crimes are on a downward trend statewide. Addiction rates and access to behavioral health treatment continue to be a problem in Oregon, and the longstanding challenge with our public defense system has reached crisis levels.

Our Plan

Improving public safety across the state must take various forms. A critical component of this work will include major reforms to and investments in the state's public defense system. This session, we will also continue supporting effective programs that reduce gun violence (including implementation of the voter-passed Measure 114) and improve behavioral health and addiction programs so that we're preventing problems before they lead to violence or police intervention. We will make sure that Oregon State Police have the resources they need to address serious crime, and partner with local law enforcement and community groups to fund proven violence prevention efforts. We will stand up to threats against Oregon's BIPOC, LGBTQ+, Jewish and other religious minority communities, and Oregonians with disabilities.

CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT



The Challenge

In the past two years, Oregon has seen an increasing incidence of destructive wildfires, persistent drought, tumultuous winter storms, and heat events—much of which is directly attributable to climate change—resulting in deaths and the destruction of homes, businesses, the agricultural industry, and landscapes. This crisis is threatening our way of life.

Our Plan

Oregon may not be a large state, but we have and will continue to set the pace for the rest of the country. By partnering with our nearby states on shared policies, we can model effective practices for meeting our climate goals while bolstering local economies. Oregon Democrats will continue to address the core sources of greenhouse gas; ensure that our homes and commercial buildings are healthy, safe, and energy efficient; and mitigate the role that transportation plays in carbon emissions. With support, our renewable energy sector will ensure that we meet the goals of our 100% clean electricity legislation, while providing jobs and economic development in more rural and coastal parts of the state. Recognizing that Oregonians need to be prepared for changing conditions, we will support residents and local governments to build resilient communities, address the water challenges and drought conditions threatening agricultural centers, and continue work on transforming the state's emergency management system so we can better respond to intensifying natural disasters.

STRONGER SCHOOLS



The Challenge

From early childhood through higher education, our schools and students face serious challenges: recovery from the pandemic, increasing behavioral health needs, recruitment and retention of a diverse educator workforce, decades of inadequate funding, housing and food insecurity, and threats to school safety.

Our Plan

Lifting up our schools, educators, and students this session must include stable and sufficient education funding from cradle to career; support for our workforce; equity initiatives for underserved student populations at all levels, including higher education; and modernizing K-12 budgets. With the passage of the Student Success Act in 2019, we made historic investments in our classrooms; now, we'll focus on making sure that those investments are moving the needle and improving students' lives. These are among the critical steps needed to ensure stronger schools that are prepared to close persistent gaps in educational outcomes, respond to challenges of recent years, and address safety concerns. We will strengthen our workforce and continue to build high-quality early learning, pre-school, and K-12 opportunities, and bolster achievable pathways to living-wage jobs and careers of the future.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



The Challenge

Many economists believe a mild or moderate recession may be on the horizon, slowing our robust growth in jobs and the economy. Fostering a healthy, vibrant, and varied economy is not just good for the financial bottom line, but also creates an environment that supports a high quality standard of living. This year, the federal government is offering incentives for investments in the semiconductor industry, but the state has to act swiftly to take advantage of those funds.

Our Plan

Now is the time to invest in opportunities that will provide good-paying jobs in communities across Oregon. This includes making use of the opportunity provided by the federal government to make investments in the semiconductor industry that will benefit the entire state. Working with state agencies, local communities, labor unions, businesses, and other key stakeholders, we'll create a plan to build up these job-creation opportunities. We'll also provide support for the homegrown industries and small businesses that are the backbone of the state's economy, including sports, agriculture, professional services, manufacturing, arts & culture, and timber. Additionally, we'll continue to bolster the systems that help low- and middle-income workers participate in the workforce, particularly access to quality childcare.

CONSUMER PROTECTION & ECONOMIC FAIRNESS



The Challenge

Consumers and working families continue to be victimized by wage theft and predatory lending and debt-collection practices, placing further limits on Oregonians' spending power as costs of living rise. These practices are further pushing our vulnerable neighbors to the breaking point.

Our Plan

This year, House Democrats will build on past policy victories by further reining in industries where wage theft is most prevalent, ending loopholes that allow bad actors to avoid accountability. We'll also strengthen our laws around debt collection to ensure that Oregonians—especially low-income families, seniors, and the veterans—aren't further victimized by aggressive and predatory debt collectors.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE



The Challenge

Despite Oregon's trailblazing work to transform our health care system and ensure that all Oregonians have access to quality care, too many of our neighbors are unable to seek medical care when they need it due to high costs. The negative impacts are wide ranging and can be seen in our workforce challenges, housing, education, and behavioral health, as well as in household finances with medical debt being one of the leading contributors to personal bankruptcy. Meanwhile, the healthcare workforce across the entire spectrum of care—from clinics to nursing homes to hospitals—is still dealing with the lingering effects of the pandemic, burnout, and inadequate staffing.

Our Plan

With the passage of Measure 111, access to health care is now a constitutional right in the state of Oregon (though it must be balanced against the state's other budget needs). House Democrats will pass legislation to get us closer to our shared goal of ensuring that every Oregonian has access to quality, affordable care. We will begin implementing a historic Medicaid Waiver that allows us to expand coverage and the quality of the coverage to those on the Oregon Health Plan (OHP). We will pass policies to make it easier to purchase affordable health care from the exchange for low-income and working-class Oregonians who do not qualify for Medicaid/OHP. We will also address workforce challenges and ensure better and safer staffing in health care settings.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH



The Challenge

The decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade* has stripped people in many states of their right to an abortion. The ruling underlined the urgency of acting to further protect reproductive care in Oregon.

Our Plan

Even before the Court's recent actions, Oregon Democrats have been laying the groundwork to protect access to abortion, contraception, and other reproductive health measures. In 2023, we'll build on that work with measures that include closing insurance gaps, including for gender-affirming care; protecting clinics and patients; and expanding access for patients in rural parts of the state where obtaining an abortion is often difficult and costly.

STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY



The Challenge

Our system of democracy is under attack from partisan political operatives, including the January 6 insurrection and election denialism. Unfortunately, too many people have lost faith in democratic institutions and don't see them improving their lives.

Our Plan

This session, Democrats will work to defend, strengthen, and modernize our systems to rebuild trust in our state government. This work will include bills to reduce the influence of big money in politics, increase transparency and accountability, improve access to voting, and reduce barriers that make it more difficult for diverse candidates to run for office and represent their constituents.

MEDIA CONTACTS

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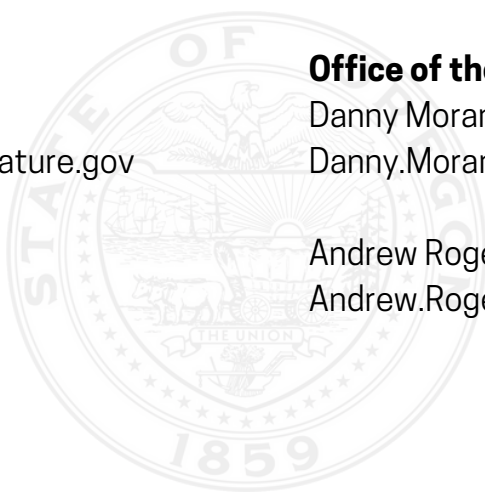
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Rep. Pam Marsh
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Rep. Jason Kropf
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Rep. Dacia Grayber
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SW Portland & E Beaverton



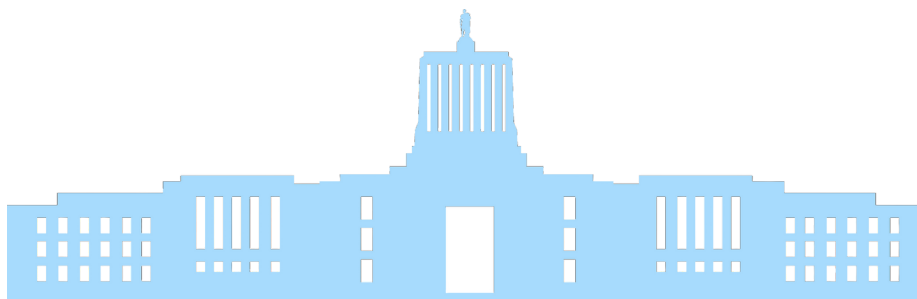
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Co-Chair, Ways & Means
N & NE Portland



Rep. Nancy Nathanson
Chair, House Revenue
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Liaison, BIPOC Caucus
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N Clackamas County



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Rep. Courtney Neron
King City, Tigard/Bull Mountain
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Rep. Farrah Chaichi
Aloha, Beaverton &
Hillsboro



Rep. Hai Pham
S Hillsboro & W Beaverton



Rep. Hoa Nguyen
E Portland & Damascus



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Happy Valley &
N Clackamas County



Rep. Jason Kropf
Bend



Rep. John Lively
Springfield



Rep. Jules Walters
West Linn/Tualatin



Leader Julie Fahey
West Eugene & Veneta



Rep. Ken Helm
Beaverton



Rep. Khanh Pham
Outer SE Portland



Rep. Lisa Reynolds
Washington County



Rep. Mark Gamba
Milwaukie



Rep. Maxine Dexter
NW & Downtown Portland
Linnton & Cathedral Park



Rep. Nancy Nathanson
N Eugene



Rep. Nathan Sosa
Greater Hillsboro



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Southern Jackson County



Rep. Paul Evans

Monmouth, Independence,
West & South Salem



Rep. Paul Holvey

Eugene



Rep. Ricki Ruiz

Gresham



Rep. Rob Nosse

Inner SE & NE Portland



Rep. Susan McLain

Western Washington County



Rep. Tawna Sanchez

N & NE Portland



Rep. Thuy Tran

NE Portland



Rep. Tom Anderson

South Salem



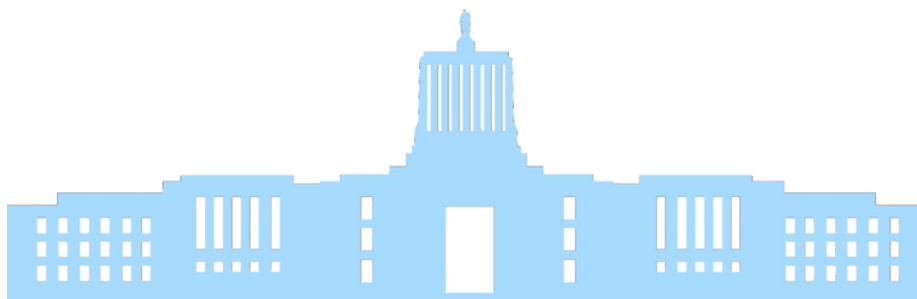
Rep. Travis Nelson

N & NE Portland



Rep. Zach Hudson

E Multnomah County



House Democrat Committee Assignments

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Ken Helm, Chair
Annessa Hartman, Vice Chair
Mark Gamba
Pam Marsh
Susan McLain

Business and Labor Committee

Paul Holvey, Chair
Nathan Sosa, Vice Chair
Dacia Grayber
Zach Hudson
Travis Nelson
Rob Nosse

Early Childhood and Human Services Committee

Lisa Reynolds, Chair
Hoa Nguyen, Vice Chair
Tom Anderson
Annessa Hartman
Travis Nelson
Courtney Neron

Education Committee

Courtney Neron, Chair
Zach Hudson, Vice Chair
Hoa Nguyen
Andrea Valderrama

Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee

Rob Nosse, Chair
Travis Nelson, Vice Chair
Ben Bowman
Maxine Dexter
Hai Pham
Thuy Tran

Climate, Energy, and Environment Committee

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Emerson Levy, Vice Chair
Tom Anderson
Ken Helm
Jason Kropf
Khanh Pham

Economic Development and Small Business Committee

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Daniel Nguyen, Vice Chair
John Lively
Hai Pham
Ricki Ruiz
Jules Walters

Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans Committee

Dacia Grayber, Chair
Thuy Tran, Vice Chair
Maxine Dexter
Paul Evans



House Democrat Committee Assignments

Gambling Regulation Committee

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Courtney Neron

Housing and Homelessness Committee

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Mark Gamba, Vice Chair
Julie Fahey
Annessa Hartman
Ken Helm
Emerson Levy

Higher Education Committee

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Ben Bowman
Zach Hudson
Nathan Sosa

Judiciary Committee

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Tom Anderson, Vice Chair
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Farrah Chaichi
Lisa Reynolds
Thuy Tran

