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191921

Emergency Ordinance

*Authorize Intergovernmental Agreement between Portland Housing Bureau and Multnomah County to accept \$500,000 to provide tenant assistance through the City Eviction Legal Defense Program

Passed

The City of Portland ordains:

Section 1. The Council finds:

1. In 2019, 5,904 eviction cases were filed in Multnomah County. Beginning in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused an economic downturn throughout Oregon and in the City of Portland with unprecedented numbers of layoffs and reduced work hours for a significant percentage of our workforce. This economic hardship, disproportionately affecting low and moderate-income workers and BIPOC workers, has resulted in lost wages and the inability to pay for basic household expenses, including rent. Currently, as was true before the COVID-19 pandemic, nonpayment of rent is the leading cause of evictions within the state and in the City of Portland.
2. Although the economy continues to recover from the direct impacts of the pandemic, high inflation and increasing housing costs means many renter households, particularly low and moderate-income and BIPOC households, continue to struggle to afford their housing. Evictions filings remain elevated from pre-pandemic numbers. In 2022, 6,608 evictions were filed in Multnomah County, the majority of which were filed after pandemic eviction protections expired in August 2023. In 2023, 8,894 evictions were filed in Multnomah County, a 50% increase from pre-pandemic filings. And in the first six months of 2024, 5,538 eviction cases have been filed. If the rate of filings remains steady this year, Multnomah County will be on track to more than double the number of eviction filings when compared to 2019.
3. Evictions have long-term consequences for tenants including homelessness, the loss of personal possessions, decreased physical and mental health, poor school performance for children, job loss, housing discrimination, and the inability to find stable replacement housing. Evictions force low-income tenants further into poverty. Studies have shown that evictions and their resulting negative impacts

Introduced by

[Mayor Ted Wheeler](#)

City department

[Housing Bureau](#)

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Requested Agenda Type

Consent

Date and Time Information

Requested Council Date

October 23, 2024

- disproportionately affect Black and Latino households, households headed by women, and households with children.
4. Evictions create significant costs within the City of Portland related to increased needs for shelter funding, education funding, health care provided in hospitals instead of community-based providers, transportation costs, and foster care.
 5. Providing access to counsel for tenants facing eviction is a proven means of preventing the disruptive displacement of families and the resulting social, economic, and public health costs of such displacement. Even if displacement cannot be avoided, counsel can help negotiate more favorable terms that allow more time to vacate, avoidance of a formal eviction on a tenant's record and possible reductions in back-rent or other costs owed by the tenant.
 6. In recognition of the transformative impact of a right to counsel in eviction proceedings for tenants, seventeen cities, four states, and one county to date have adopted codes creating a right to counsel for tenants facing eviction.
 7. The Portland Housing Bureau (PHB) recognizes the importance of providing legal assistance to tenants facing potential eviction. In addition, as evictions disproportionately impact BIPOC renters, preventing evictions and their negative consequences is a way to advance the City's Racial Equity Goals & Strategies and PHB's Racial Equity Plan.
 8. With this funding, United Way of the Columbia Willamette will provide financial assistance to a minimum of 75 households facing eviction in Multnomah County. Demographic data of Program participants will be tracked to assess the Program's effectiveness in advancing the City's Racial Equity Goals & Strategies and the PHB's Racial Equity Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Council directs:

- A. The Portland Housing Bureau is hereby authorized to enter into an intergovernmental agreement with Multnomah County for \$500,000, substantially in accordance with the form attached as Exhibit A.
- B. The Portland Housing Bureau Director is hereby authorized to execute, amend, and terminate existing and new contracts and agreements for the Eviction Legal Defense Program funded by these County funds with the expiration date of June 30, 2025, substantially in accordance with the form attached as Exhibit B.

Section 2. The Council declares that an emergency exists because the program funds must be obligated within required timeframes; therefore, this Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage by Council.

Exhibits and Attachments

 [Exhibit A](#) 212.88 KB

 [Exhibit B](#) 468.57 KB

An ordinance when passed by the Council shall be signed by the Auditor. It shall be carefully filed and preserved in the custody of the Auditor (City Charter Chapter 2 Article 1 Section 2-122)

Passed by Council

October 23, 2024

Auditor of the City of Portland

Simone Rede

Impact Statement

Purpose of Proposed Legislation and Background Information

The purpose of this legislation is to authorize the Portland Housing Bureau (PHB) to enter into an IGA with Multnomah County. Under the IGA, the County will pass PHB \$500,000 to provide financial assistance to tenants served by the City's Eviction Legal Defense (ELD) program.

Financial and Budgetary Impacts

With this funding, United Way of the Columbia Willamette will provide financial assistance to a minimum of 75 households facing eviction in Multnomah County. The overall pool of financial assistance available in the program will increase by 47%, with a total 1.3 million in funds available to serve a minimum of 216 households. Demographic data of Program participants will be tracked to assess the Program's effectiveness in advancing the City's Racial Equity Goals & Strategies and the Portland Housing Bureau's Racial Equity Plan.

Economic and Real Estate Development Impacts

There are no anticipated adverse impacts to economic and real estate development. ELD provides financial assistance to tenants who are facing eviction, and provides funds to pay rent debt, damages to housing units, assistance with utilities, some court costs for landlords, and one month of future rent. As many of these payments go to the landlord, these funds will help stabilize housing providers.

Community Impacts and Community Involvement

During the Summer of 2021, the Rental Services Commission made a series of program/policy recommendations to City Council with the goal of supporting Portland renters who were struggling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These recommendations included that the City expand access to justice and legal services to guarantee that every tenant facing eviction has the right to an attorney.

In 2021 and 2022, the Rental Services Commission (RSC) analyzed housing stabilization and financial assistant programs across multiple jurisdictions. This series of meetings culminated in a letter to Portland's City Council recommending that additional financial assistance for tenants vulnerable to eviction, displacement, and potential homelessness is made available through various programs, including the Eviction Legal Defense Program.

The above recommendations either directly align with, or support, the goal of the Eviction Legal Defense Program, which seeks to increase access to legal representation for tenants facing termination of their subsidy or eviction from their housing, and improved outcomes for tenants in the program.

100% Renewable Goal

N/A

Budgetary Impact Worksheet

| Fund | Fund Center | Commitment Item | Functional Area | Funded Program | Grant | Sponsored Program | Amount |
|--------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-------|-------------------|-----------|
| 217007 | HCPG000006 | 441100 | CDTLRS0000 | 0 | TBD | TBD | \$500,000 |
| 217007 | HCPG000006 | 529001 | CDTLRS0000 | 0 | TBD | TBD | \$500,000 |
| | | | | | | | |

Financial and Budget Analysis

Under the IGA, the County will pass \$500,000 through the Portland Housing Bureau to provide financial assistance to tenants served by the City's Eviction Legal Defense (ELD) program. With this funding, United Way of the Columbia Willamette will provide financial assistance to a minimum of 75 households facing eviction in Multnomah County. The overall pool of financial assistance available in the program will increase by 47%, with a total \$1.3 million in funds available to serve a minimum of 216 households. PHB's budget in the Grants Fund will be amended by the \$500,000 amount via this ordinance.

Document History

Item 896 Consent Agenda in [October 23, 2024 Council Agenda](https://www.portland.gov/council/agenda/2024/10/23)
(<https://www.portland.gov/council/agenda/2024/10/23>)

City Council

Passed

Aye (4): Mingus Mapps, Dan Ryan, Rene Gonzalez, Ted Wheeler

Absent (1): Carmen Rubio