

## Omaha Housing Authority Sues Nebraska Over New Housing Oversight Law

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— Categories: Real Estate



OMAHA – The Omaha Housing Authority (OHA) has filed a lawsuit against the state of Nebraska over a new law set to take effect July 1 that would expand state oversight of public housing.

The lawsuit, filed Thursday in Lancaster County District Court, challenges LB1023, a measure approved by lawmakers earlier this year. The law gives Nebraska's Department of Economic Development new authority to review and approve housing policies, budgets, and tenant rules for all public housing agencies across the state.

OHA leaders argue the law goes too far and undermines the agency's ability to manage housing programs independently.

"This legislation creates unnecessary obstacles and delays that could harm residents who rely on us," said Joanie Poore, OHA's executive director. "We believe local boards should be trusted to make decisions that reflect the needs of their communities."

The timing of the lawsuit is notable. Earlier this year, OHA settled a class-action case over complaints about poor living conditions and maintenance issues in some of its properties. Those problems drew strong criticism and prompted lawmakers to push for more accountability, leading to the creation of LB1023.

Supporters of the new law say stronger oversight is needed to protect both tenants and taxpayers.

"Residents deserve safe, clean, and well-managed housing," said State Senator Megan Hunt, one of the bill's sponsors. "This law helps ensure public resources are used responsibly."

OHA's lawsuit, however, argues that LB1023 violates the Nebraska constitution by granting state officials what the agency describes as "veto power" over local decisions. The lawsuit also warns that the law could disrupt federal funding that supports repairs and improvements in Omaha's public housing.

The Housing Authority is asking the court to issue an injunction that would prevent the law from taking effect while the legal challenge moves forward.

Housing advocates across Nebraska are watching closely. They say the outcome could affect how other local housing authorities operate.

"This is about whether decisions will be made locally or dictated by the state," said Carla Sanders, director of the Nebraska Affordable Housing Network. "It could set a precedent for how housing programs are run across Nebraska."

No hearing date has been set. For now, OHA says it will continue normal operations while preparing for what could be a lengthy court battle over the future of public housing oversight.