



March 25, 2019

Joint Subcommittee on Ways and Means on Transportation and Economic
Development
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 5512

Chair Manning, Chair Gomberg, and members of the committee

Oregon Food Bank believes that no one should be hungry, that hunger starves the human spirit, and that everyone deserves healthy, fresh food. We have spent three decades building a highly effective, nimble and collaborative community response to hunger through a statewide network of 21 regional food banks and 1,200 programs and partners serving 800,000 people in Oregon and Clark County, Washington.

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to end hunger and its root causes. We know that the nexus between housing and hunger is strong. Clients increasingly tell us that they have to make the tough choice between rent and food. They speak of ever-increasing rents and the inability to find an affordable place to call home. Some speak of becoming homeless for the first time because they cannot find an affordable place to live.

The good news is that housing insecurity is solvable, and there are state programs that successfully help to ensure that every Oregonian has a safe, stable and affordable place to call home. Emergency rent assistance makes the difference between a family being on the street or staying safely housed when a car breaks down or a medical emergency occurs. Access to housing coupled with needed services help people struggling with addiction stabilize and begin to rebuild their lives. Securing a home in an affordable housing development immediately eases the pressure on already too-tight budgets. These housing programs work and make remarkable changes in the lives of Oregonians struggling with housing insecurity.

Oregon Food Bank urges the Legislature to fund the following programs:

Emergency Housing Account and State Homeless Assistance Program: these programs provide key services to prevent and end homelessness. Emergency rent assistance, domestic violence shelters, rapid re-housing, and other crucial services can make the difference between someone becoming homeless or staying housed. We urge the Legislature to fund these programs at \$50 million in SB 5512.

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Local Innovation and Fast Track: Regulated affordable housing provides much-needed stable housing for low-income Oregonians. Our clients tell us that they begin to lining up and camping out days before the housing lists open in the hopes of securing an affordable apartment. We know that additional resources are needed for this critical program. We urge the Legislature to issue \$200 million in general obligation bonds for this program.

Permanent Supportive Housing: Permanent supportive housing is one of the key solutions to ending homelessness for people who experience health conditions, mental health issues, or addictions disorders. We urge the Legislature to issue \$50 million in general obligation bonds to develop new supportive housing across Oregon.

Everywhere we go the message is the same: Oregonians across the state are being forced to make the tough choice between paying their rent or putting food on the table to feed their family. These crucial housing programs help to address these problems and ensure that every Oregonian has a safe, stable and affordable place to call home. We urge the Legislature to fund these programs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Anneliese Koehler
Public Policy Advocate, Oregon Food Bank

