

TO: Joint Committee on Tax Expenditures
FROM: Leann Knapp, Oregon Food Bank
RE: **Support HB 2096, Agricultural Worker Housing Tax Credit**
DATE: June 4, 2021



Co-Chairs Burdick and Nathanson and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 11 Oregonians were food insecure. **In 2020, one in five Oregonians faced hunger, many of whom were individuals who work in our food supply chain.** And the public health and economic impacts of the pandemic have fallen hardest on people who have faced systemic inequities for generations: communities of color, immigrants and refugees, single parents and caregivers, and our trans and gender non-conforming neighbors.

Agricultural workers are a critical piece of Oregon's food system, and they make the work we do at Oregon Food Bank to distribute food to Oregonians experiencing hunger across the state possible. However, due to low wages and often inadequate access to other benefits and protections, **many of those individuals are unable to afford the food they help grow and harvest,** let alone afford safe and suitable housing for them and their families.

Every Oregonian should have a safe and healthy home, but **the COVID-19 pandemic and wildfires have only increased the already dire need for housing amongst agricultural workers.** It is vital that we take action as a state to ensure that need is met. That is why Oregon Food Bank is proud to support House Bill 2096, which would:

- Increase the current Agricultural Workforce Tax Credit tax credit allocation to \$24 million per biennium; and
- Provide additional flexibility for housing providers so they can better utilize the credits and provide additional housing for such a critical workforce.

Oregon Food Bank urges your support for House Bill 2096. We have the opportunity to rebuild and emerge stronger from the overlapping crises our state has experienced. This is our moment to embrace our shared values, care for each other and take bold action in support of some of our state's most critical workers.

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