

To: House Human Services Committee
From: Alicia Temple, Oregon Law Center
Date: February 3, 2022
Re: Support for HB 4088

Chair Williams and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center (OLC), I am submitting testimony in support of HB 4088. This bill will create a path for some Oregonians on SNAP to access hot meals.

OLC is a non-profit organization that provides free legal help to people struggling to make ends meet. Our mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. We advocate for our clients and for the services and programs that help them to overcome poverty. SNAP is a critical program for our clients to access food for themselves and their families.

The Restaurant Meals Program is a federal program that allows elderly, disabled and houseless recipients of SNAP to purchase prepared meals from participating restaurants. Many of OLC's clients are people experiencing houselessness, seniors, and people with disabilities who face barriers to accessing hot food, whether it is because they don't have a kitchen to prepare food in or have limits to their ability to cook. These communities qualify for SNAP benefits but still face food insecurity.

While SNAP has federal limitations to what types of foods qualify, there are changes Oregon can make that decreases the barriers for some communities. The Restaurant Meals Program is one of those changes. The Restaurant Meal Program would allow restaurants to enter into contracts that make them eligible to accept SNAP dollars for the food their restaurant provides. HB 4088 directs ODHS to convene a workgroup to prepare for the successful, accessible, equitable implementation of the Restaurant Meals Program in Oregon in 2023. We can learn from the six other states that have implemented this program, in addition to the voices of the community members who stand to benefit from this change.

Expanding the ways that people can access food in a way that they can eat it is critical for many of our communities. Thank you for your support for HB 4088.