

DATE: February 7, 2023  
TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary  
FROM: Sammi Teo, Public Policy Advocate  
RE: Support for Consistent Community Supervision, SB 581



Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Food Bank’s mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today; and we advocate to change policies that drive hunger and poverty. We have the opportunity to rebuild and emerge stronger so that we can end hunger for good in our communities. This is our moment to embrace our shared values and take bold action in support of *all* Oregonians.

**The structure of our public safety system directly impacts rates of food insecurity.**

The way our public safety system is structured has a direct impact on how food insecure our communities are. In a study by the National Institutes of Health, 91% of citizens returning to society from incarceration reported being food insecure. In addition, 75% of them reported that it is “extremely difficult” or “impossible” to find a job post-incarceration<sup>1</sup>, which in turn makes it extremely difficult to end cycles of poverty. Across the U.S., when formerly incarcerated people do find a job, they suffer a permanent reduction in their lifetime earning potential, by nearly \$180,000.<sup>2</sup> Amongst households with a formerly incarcerated family member, 70% struggle to meet basic needs, such as food and housing.<sup>3</sup> We need a public safety system that is built on accountability and opportunity – not one that only makes it more difficult to return to and thrive in society.

That is why Oregon Food Bank is a part of the Transforming Justice Coalition: a group of people who are directly impacted by the criminal justice system, culturally specific service providers, and policy advocates coming together to reimagine how our public safety system functions. We believe Oregon should have a fairer and more effective justice system that ensures safety, success, racial equity, and healing.

**SB 581 creates consistency, incentivizes success, reduces caseloads, and promotes racial equity.**

SB 581 simply makes Oregon’s earned discharge system consistent for Oregonians who are on parole, probation, and post-prison supervision. Currently, there are 3 protocols for people and

<sup>1</sup> [www.bread.org/article/mass-incarceration-a-major-cause-of-hunger](http://www.bread.org/article/mass-incarceration-a-major-cause-of-hunger).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

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their supervising officers to track. People convicted before August 2013 have no access to the program; people convicted between August 2013 to December 2021 have one set of rules, and people convicted after January 2022 have another set of rules. **This is a needless and confusing distinction that is solely based on what day a person was convicted. It is a barrier to success while on supervision.** There needs to be consistency so that people and their supervising officers can better understand and track progress. That is exactly what SB 581 does.

By passing SB 581, Oregon's supervision program would:

- **Create consistency:** Allow those who are successfully meeting their supervision goals to earn up to a 50% reduction in their sentence and ensure eligibility is determined based on the same criteria for all, regardless of when someone was convicted.
- **Incentivize success:** Reward people who are successful by providing people on supervision with feedback for making progress on their case plan.
- **Reduce caseloads:** Supervision officers can focus on people who are struggling to comply with their conditions of post-prison supervision.
- **Promote racial equity:** By safely reducing the number of people on supervision, we can make Oregon's public safety system more equitable and more effective.

Excessively burdensome parole and probation unnecessarily disrupts a person's life, family, and employment, and prevents people from rebuilding their lives and thriving – barriers that disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, Latine, and other people of color. **By making earned discharge eligibility requirements consistent, we can build on people's strengths and promote stable homes, families, and economies.**

This is why we urge you to support SB 581. Thank you.

