

DATE: March 1, 2023
TO: House Committee on Emergency Management, General Gov't, and Veterans
FROM: Sammi Teo, Public Policy Advocate
RE: Support for HB 2650



Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Lewis and Tran, 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. That is why we are a part of the Transforming Justice Coalition: a group of people directly impacted by the justice system, culturally specific service providers, and policy advocates coming together to reimagine how our public safety system functions, and to ensure equitable policy outcomes that serve us all.

At Oregon Food Bank, we know that the best solutions to eliminate the root causes of hunger come from those of us who have experienced food insecurity and poverty first-hand. However, the policy-making process and participation in workgroups is highly inaccessible for the vast majority of people, and especially for those experiencing poverty and food insecurity. When legislative workgroups and task forces lack diverse voices from people with lived expertise, they often create policies that don't support – or worse, negatively affect – people across the state, particularly Black, Indigenous, Latine, and other Oregonians of color. We need to ensure the voices of those directly impacted by policies are heard and centered.

HB 2650 ensures we have a more complete understanding of what a policy would, could, and should look like when it's actually being implemented.

HB 2650 is about strengthening democracy and ensuring that legislation is informed by lived expertise. It will require certain workgroups to have specific levels of participation from those directly impacted by the specific policy being discussed and community-based organizations. The intent of this policy is to ensure that the voices of those directly impacted by what is being discussed are centered in the conversation. For Oregon Food Bank's work in particular, this could mean that a workgroup or task force focusing on the development of a bill to fix low participation rate in a food assistance program centers the voices and experiences of people who have navigated through the program in question.

It is also important that community members have the option to be paid for their participation, especially when they are taking time away from their busy lives. This bill would provide compensation for persons not otherwise compensated by their jobs or other positions, which in turn improves access to policy-making spaces for those experiencing poverty and its coinciding effects, such as lack of transportation or child care.

We can create more equitable, more successful policy outcomes with task forces and workgroups that reflect the people who are most affected by the policy being discussed. This is why we urge you to support HB 2650. Thank you.

Oregon Food Bank
Headquarters /
Metro Services
7900 NE 33rd Drive
Portland, OR 97211
503-282-0555

Oregon Food Bank
Washington County
Services
1870 NW 173rd Ave
Beaverton, OR 97006
503-439-6510

Oregon Food Bank
Tillamook County
Services
PO Box 1344
Tillamook, OR 97141
503-842-3154

Oregon Food Bank
Southeast Oregon
Services
773 S Oregon Street
Ontario, OR 97914
541-889-9206

Columbia Gorge
Food Bank
3610 Crates Way
The Dalles, OR 97058
541-370-2333

