

**DANIEL BONHAM**  
SENATE DISTRICT 26



## OREGON LEGISLATURE

February 4, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Human Services

Chair Gelser Blouin and members of the committee,

I strongly refute the narrative presented in the ACLU's testimony regarding Senate Bill 644. Their portrayal of this bill as an assault on democracy is not only misleading but also dangerously overlooks the critical need for accountability in organizations that manage substantial public funds.

First and foremost, the claim that SB 644 targets the Oregon Food Bank for its political activities is a gross misrepresentation, perhaps a result of their organization's apparent lack of collaboration with Republicans. The ACLU's partisan alignment is evident, and I for one, couldn't pick out an ACLU lobbyist in a crowd of one, which might explain their lack of awareness about several other Republican bills who have a broad range of audits for nonprofits and agencies alike. These bills counter their narrative of selective persecution. The Oregon Food Bank is a good starting point to have this conversation about accountability of public funds administered by nonprofits.

However, we do not stop at just demanding audits. We insist on the inclusion of comprehensive oversight mechanisms in all future legislation. Nonprofits receiving significant public funds must be under continuous scrutiny, not just periodic checks after money is spent. This is crucial to ensure that their operations align with their stated missions and that public funds are not washed away into non-core functions that fail to move stated metrics for Oregonians.

Let's draw a parallel here to state employees: just as they are strictly prohibited from campaigning on the public dime, nonprofits receiving significant public funds should not use Oregonians tax dollars for political advocacy. The principle of campaign finance reform applies here—where transparency and limitation on the use of public resources for political purposes are paramount. If we hold our public servants to these standards, why should nonprofits, especially those heavily funded by public money, be exempt?

The Oregon Food Bank's deep involvement in political advocacy has been well-documented, sparking legitimate concerns about the integrity and focus of its operations. When public funds are used to fuel political agendas rather than directly addressing hunger and poverty, it's not just a matter of free speech; it's a matter of public trust and fiduciary responsibility. While the ACLU can blame themselves for not knowing about other Republican bills and the broad scope of their

audits, the Oregon Food Bank serves as a good catalyst to start this crucial conversation about accountability.

Your reliance on legal precedents to argue against this bill skirts around the core issue: the real use or misuse of funds. Protecting free speech does not mean allowing organizations to sidestep accountability for how they spend money intended for public welfare. The Oregon Food Bank's political activities, widely discussed in public discourse, underline the necessity for such oversight to ensure that their primary mission is not overshadowed.

The examples cited from other states do not justify turning a blind eye to potential mismanagement here in Oregon. Accountability is foundational to a healthy democracy, not an attack on it. We are not advocating for a witch hunt but for responsible governance that ensures nonprofits are not just charitable in name but in deed as well.

In conclusion, we forcefully argue that the push for more detailed audits that public reporting of 990s. And adoption of a broader oversight mechanism with reforms akin to campaign finance regulations are defenses of democratic principles, not assaults. This bill is about safeguarding the public's interest in how their money is spent. We demand transparency over unchecked political influence by organizations that have lost sight of their core humanitarian missions; including the ACLU.

We urge the committee to reject the ACLU's arguments, support measures that prioritize accountability, ensure that future legislation includes robust oversight for nonprofits handling significant public funds. We are happy to work with democrats on amendments to have more oversight of any NGO receiving significant public funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Bonham". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Senator Daniel Bonham  
Senate District 26