

TO: Joint Subcommittee On Transportation and Economic Development
FROM: Loren Naldoza
RE: HB 5011
DATE: March 27, 2025



Co-Chair Woods, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on HB 5011, the appropriations bill for Oregon Housing & Community Services (OHCS).

Oregon Food Bank’s mission is “to eliminate hunger and its root causes... *because no one should be hungry.*” Yet one third more Oregonians experience hunger today than before the pandemic. Last year, we saw 2.5 million visits to our network of over 1,200 food assistance sites through the Oregon Food Bank Network—a 31% increase from the previous year.

Housing insecurity is a root cause of hunger.

As part of the State’s work to end food insecurity, it must also address one of its largest underlying causes: housing instability and the cost of living. Everyone deserves a safe place to call home—and no one should have to choose between buying food and paying for housing. Yet Oregonians who are renters are three times more likely to experience food insecurity than homeowners.¹

The lack of safe, stable, and affordable housing remains one of the leading drivers of hunger and poverty throughout our state. Roughly 138,000 renter households in Oregon (or 22 percent) have extremely low incomes, with a household total income at or below the federal poverty line, or 30 percent of their area median income (AMI).² Oregon also has a shortage of over 100,000 rental homes that are affordable and available for households with extremely low incomes. Specifically, the annual household income needed to afford a two-bedroom rental home is roughly \$62,000.³ These housing and cost-of-living crises disproportionately harm Oregon’s immigrant communities,⁴ who are already barred from countless basic safety net programs and are more than twice as likely than white Oregonians to face food insecurity.

¹ Mark Edwards, Food Insecurity in Oregon: Considering the Role of Housing, Oregon State University, Nov. 2024. https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/2024-11/Oregon_Food_Insecurity_Rates_2021-2023_november_2024.pdf.

² National Low Income Housing Coalition, “Housing Needs by State, Oregon,” <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/oregon>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Allison Bovell-Ammon. et al., Changes in Economic Hardships Arising During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Differences by Nativity and Race. Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health. Sep. 30, 2022, <https://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/s10903-022-01410-z.pdf>.

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Accordingly, the following investments are critical for the Legislature to make in order to address our ongoing housing crisis and, by extension, food insecurity in Oregon:

- **Emergency rent assistance.** \$109 million should be the minimum amount of rent assistance necessary to prevent evictions over the next two years.
- **Homelessness prevention services.** \$63.2 million to support housing navigation services, landlord-tenant education and outreach, legal services, tenant supports, eviction prevention, tenant advocacy, and rapid rehousing services.
- **Home Fund.** \$14 million to provide short-term rental assistance and prevent housing insecurity among Oregon's immigrant communities.
- **Creation of new affordable housing.** \$700 million for LIFT rental housing (POP 515). Oregon has a shortage of over 100,000 units of truly affordable rental housing. The Legislature must continue to make investments to fill this need.
- **Preservation of existing affordable housing.** \$161.4 million (POP 519). While the state must continue to focus on housing production, it cannot forget the need to preserve existing affordable housing. Preservation of existing affordable housing is cost-effective, and provides ongoing stability for residents that already call these communities home.

Everyone deserves a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home. In order to solve food insecurity in Oregon, the Legislature must continue to make robust investments that protect Oregon renters, and create and maintain affordable housing in our state.

Thank you in advance for your consideration, and for your service to Oregon.

Sincerely,

Loren Naldoza

