

TO: Joint Interim Committee on The Third Special Session
FROM: Susannah Morgan, CEO, Oregon Food Bank
RE: **LC 18 will help our communities Emerge Stronger**
DATE: December 17, 2020



Oregon faces a housing and hunger crisis. We must pass LC 18 to Emerge Stronger.

Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 11 Oregonians were food insecure. **In 2020, 1 in 4 of our neighbors faced hunger**¹ – a dramatic increase driven by the public health and economic fallout of COVID-19.

The link between hunger and housing is clear. Oregonians who are renters are more than 10 times likelier than homeowners to experience hunger². In 2020, a staggering **53% of renters cut back on food and medications to pay rent.**³

Oregon Food Bank urges support for LC 18 to prevent a new wave of mass displacement and homelessness as we enter the coldest months of winter. The state’s eviction moratorium is set to expire on Dec. 31. As of this writing, we face uncertainty as to whether federal food assistance for tens of thousands of Oregonians will end as we grapple with a new wave of COVID-prompted disruptions.

It is clear that Oregon’s statewide eviction and foreclosure moratorium has been one of our most successful remedies for communities bearing the brunt of the pandemic. The moratorium should be extended through June of 2021 to help families get through the school year.

We strongly support the \$200 million package in this bill. There should be a landlord compensation fund that helps smaller landlords with back rent so they won’t have to evict if they are financial straits, and also a rental assistance fund to help those tenants who will need assistance moving forward or whose landlords don’t apply for the fund.

Our Black and Brown neighbors are at the greatest risk of lifelong harm from the COVID evictions. Discriminatory housing policies have made homeownership difficult and inaccessible, leaving people of color at higher risk of rental evictions even as higher rates of COVID exposure are leaving people ill and economically stressed. This includes 56% of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) tenants owe back rent.

We thank the legislature for convening to address the needs of our communities. With the clock ticking on existing protections and economic instability on the rise, our shared values call upon us to care for one another. We urge swift passage of LC18.

¹ <https://today.oregonstate.edu/news/new-osu-report-shows-about-25-oregonians-experienced-food-insecurity-2020>

² https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/oregon_food_insecurity_rates_by_demographic_groups_2017-2019.pdf

³ <https://www.pdx.edu/homelessness/oregon-renters-report>