

April 10, 2021

Co-Chairs Taylor, and Salinas, Vice-Chairs, Knopp, and Boshart-Davis, and members of the redistricting committees,

For the record my name is Ruby Haack, my pronouns are she/her/hers and I live in Lane County, District 4. I have lived here for seven months, and I'm currently a freshman at the University of Oregon. I love living in Eugene. It's my college town and my first home away from home. However, as a new resident of Lane County I have noticed the prevalence of housing and food insecurity that has been inflicting my peers and the greater community. At school, I work as a SNAP ambassador and provide my classmates opportunities to get connected with SNAP resources. As a Pathway Oregon student, OHP member, and someone who was raised on SNAP benefits, I understand how important the role government aid plays in relieving some of the pressure that rests on the backs of low-income families. It can be expensive to be poor, and a consistent food supply is an essential resource that allows low-income communities to reallocate their money and energy to other ways that keep their family afloat. This is an experience that can be felt county-wide, as 60,000 Lane County residents relied on SNAP benefits in 2018.

With other financial burdens imposed on students, such as increasing tuition fees, food insecurity often goes undiscussed in college communities. But food insecurity is prevalent among college campuses across the country, and disproportionately targets marginalized students, specifically students of BIPOC and transgender communities. In a Hope Lab survey that consisted of 86,000 students from across the United States, 46% of responses identified as food insecure. However, according to a U.S. Government Accountability Office report, two million students who were potentially eligible for SNAP didn't report receiving benefits. Lane County is home to over 20,000 college students from University of Oregon alone, and 36% of all University of Oregon students experience food insecurity: 35% of white students, 44% of Black students, 50% of Latinx students. And of course, with the COVID-19 pandemic, these disparities are only expected to grow larger.

COVID-19 has also exacerbated Lane County's housing crisis and has further destabilized lower-income communities. According to Eugene's 2020 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, one impediment that would "benefit from further investigation" is the act of renters' discrimination. It reports that The Renter's Experience Survey found that 22% of respondents felt like they had experienced housing discrimination. It also reports that these respondents were from a range of protected classes (protected classes meaning race, gender identity, ability, religion, national origin). This analysis also reports that the Fair Housing Council of Oregon found that those with a disability reported the highest amount of discrimination, as landlords refused to provide reasonable accommodations such as wheel-chair ramps and shower bars. Renters' discrimination makes affordable housing inaccessible to marginalized communities, ultimately increasing houselessness rates. According to Eugene's 2019 Point-in-Time Count Report, 2,165 folks in Lane County were experiencing houselessness.

Throughout this process I believe these three key things should be at the forefront of consideration:

- 1) Impacted communities need to be centered in the process and outcome.

- 2) Oregon voters have implemented backstops for this exact kind of situation
- 3) Feeling represented in your district

A community of interest refers to a group of people with a common set of concerns that may be affected by legislation. Examples of communities of interest include ethnic, racial, and economic groups. It is important to note the intersectionality of this issue, as marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by food and housing insecurity. Consequently, with the constant concern of feeding and housing one's families, it can be increasingly difficult to find extra time to voice one's needs. That's why it is imperative that low-income families and students are provided reliable representation and are provided with the resources they need to vote for policies on their own behalf. This comes with safe housing, reliable food sources, and an address from which they can vote.

We don't have to only rely on Census data for redistricting. Oregon had great resources like the PSU Population Research Center to start considering important data, like the American Community Survey, school districts, and housing developments. This can give us a chance to start the process before the census data is available and then re-engage the community with maps made using census data. Oregon has a history of discrimination against BIPOC folks. We know that BIPOC communities have voted as blocks, ensuring this continues is of the utmost importance. It should be noted that not having any examples of maps makes this process more difficult, giving something concrete to look at would help the community engage.

I look forward to working with this committee, the Oregon legislature and our communities to ensure that redistricting engages the food and housing insecure students and other members of the Lane County community, and that it responds to our growing needs. The Legislature's process for engaging Oregon communities in redistricting is going to be critical.

Thank you very much for your time and work on this issue.

Ruby Haack