

TO: House Committee on Judiciary  
FROM: Leann Knapp, Oregon Food Bank  
RE: **Support HB 3115 to Further Decriminalize Homelessness**  
DATE: March 9, 2021



Chair Bynum, Vice Chairs Noble and Power, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Leann Knapp (she/her) and I am here today representing the Oregon Food Bank. Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 11 Oregonians were food insecure. **In 2020, 1 in 4 of our neighbors faced hunger**<sup>1</sup> – a dramatic increase driven by the public health and economic fallout of COVID-19. These increases make it more important than ever that this Legislative Session we pass policies that will support our communities to emerge stronger from this crisis.

At Oregon Food Bank, we know that both **hunger and homelessness are symptoms of harmful policies and systems** that create barriers for people to thrive, and that we can only emerge stronger when we address them together, as a community. That is why **we reject the criminalization of poverty**. Poverty is one of the greatest drivers of both hunger and homelessness in our communities – a reality many Oregonians know too well. **We cannot allow acts of survival, resourcefulness, and resilience to be met with threats of arrest or violence**. This is especially true for communities of color and our trans and gender non-conforming neighbors, for whom the disproportionate impact of harm in potential enforcement interactions is well-documented.

**Oregon Food Bank communities envision a future where everyone can access employment, education, housing and healthcare.** Each of us here today has our own work to make that a reality, but as we work to build that vision, people without housing should not be penalized for trying to survive. House Bill 3115 is based on these basic principles and community values. It would bring clarity and **guidance for local governments** as they manage outdoor public spaces and would ensure that Oregon's cities have **reasonable ordinances** that take into account the needs of people experiencing homelessness

**Oregon Food Bank strongly urges your support for House Bill 3115.** We believe this piece of legislation is an important step in protecting some of our most vulnerable communities while we work toward larger systemic solutions to homelessness and hunger.

We thank you for your dedication and your willingness to join Oregon Food Bank in building communities that never go hungry.

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

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

