

TO: Senate Committee on Housing & Development
FROM: Leann Knapp, Oregon Food Bank
RE: **Yes on House Bill 2550**
DATE: May 3, 2021



Chair Jama and Members of the Committee,

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. These increases make it more important than ever that this Legislative Session we pass policies that will support our communities in emerging stronger from this crisis.

At Oregon Food Bank, we know that **hunger is a symptom of harmful policies and systems** that create barriers for people to thrive. We also know that we can only end hunger for good by tackling its root causes. We must act to address the inequality, racism and oppression that create serious disparities in all areas of life, including housing.

Studies have repeatedly shown **a strong relationship between owning a home and a lower likelihood of experiencing hunger**.² The data is clear that homeownership and affordable mortgages allow community members to build assets and manage more predictable housing costs over time, which is especially key for Black and Brown Oregonians who have long faced discriminatory housing policies that make homeownership more difficult and inaccessible.

That is why **Oregon Food Bank urges your support for House Bill 2550**- so Oregonians across the state know that when they are ready to buy a home- a dream for so many- they have a fair shot at achieving that goal.

Access to safe, stable and affordable **housing- including equitable access to homeownership- is a cornerstone of our effort to build a future without hunger**, but we won't be able to achieve that goal if Oregonians are can't access it because they are facing discrimination on the basis of their race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, familial status or source of income.

We would like to thank those who convened to craft policies that create a more equitable future for homeownership in Oregon, and again express our strong support for House Bill 2550. Thank you for your consideration.

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

² <https://equityhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12939-019-1114-z>