

TO: Senate Committee on Housing and Development
FROM: Leann Knapp, Oregon Food Bank
RE: **SB 79 will fight hunger by expanding equitable access to housing**
DATE: February 11, 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 - especially 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. This is especially key for Black and Brown Oregonians who have long faced discriminatory housing policies that make homeownership more difficult and inaccessible in our state.

When Oregon Food Bank communities share their biggest concerns for the future, some of the most common issues they share are low wages, along with the cost and availability of housing. That is why **access to safe, stable, and affordable housing options- including equitable access to homeownership- is a cornerstone of Oregon Food Bank's work to build a future without hunger**. However, we won't be able to achieve that goal if Oregonians of color can't attain homeownership because they don't have the support they deserve to get over the hurdle of a down payment.

Oregon Food Bank urges your support for SB 79 to create a more equitable future for homeownership in Oregon where families across the state know that when they too will have a chance to achieve the dream of owning their own home.

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

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

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