

TO: Senate Committee on Housing and Development
FROM: Matt Newell-Ching, Public Policy Manager, Oregon Food Bank
RE: Support for SB 1536-1: Everyone Deserves to be Safe in our Homes
DATE: February 2, 2022



Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

Last year's record-breaking heat dome was a deadly and traumatic event for our communities. At least 96 people died across Oregon in 28 cities. Sadly, we know the realities of climate change mean our planet and our state will continue to warm.

This event impacted all Oregonians, but it hit Oregonians who are renters especially hard. And many renters already faced challenges. **Oregonians who are renters are more than six times more likely than homeowners to experience hunger.** In 2020, a staggering 53% of renters cut back on food and medications to pay rent. We also know that historic injustices including redlining and Black exclusion play a significant role in racial disparities in homeownership. There is a direct line between these disparities and higher rates of food insecurity for Black and Brown Oregonians.

Adding insult to injury, renters often face barriers to install cooling units. **We can remove barriers to installing cooling units by passing SB 1536 with the -1 Amendment.**

Housing, both its accessibility and cost, is one of the most common reasons cited for needing to access food assistance through the 1,400 partner agencies in Oregon Food Bank's network. Oregon Food Bank believes it is critical to support renters both with direct assistance and to improve health and safety in our homes.

In addition to removing barriers to installing cooling units, Oregon food Bank supports the \$15m funding in SB 1536 for landlords to install heat and cooling pumps. This is a win-win for landlords and tenants.

Many might remember a time in which access to a cooling unit in a home in Oregon was a "nice to have." But we know that when the temperature can rise to 116 degrees, access to cooling is a matter of safety, and basic human dignity, and even a matter of life and death..

Oregon Food Bank urges passage of SB 1536 with the -1 amendment.

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