

TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
FROM: Matt Newell-Ching, Public Policy Manager, Oregon Food Bank
RE: Support for SB 1510: Disparities in the Justice System Perpetuate Hunger
DATE: February 3, 2022



Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to end hunger and its root causes. Simply put, there is a clear and direct line between inequities in our justice system and higher rates of hunger, and that's especially true for Oregonians of color.

The United States has one of the highest incarceration rates in the industrialized world. Nationwide, community members who are Black and Brown are between 3 and 6 times more likely to be incarcerated as people who are white *for the same offense*. A staggering 91% of people who return to our communities from incarceration experience food insecurity¹. These disparities play a significant role in why Oregonians who are Black and Brown are twice as likely to struggle to afford food and to face unemployment as Oregonians who are White. This is a clear example of how systemic racism in our justice system is a root cause of hunger.

Oregon Food Bank Supports SB 1510 because we believe our policies and our laws should strengthen opportunities for families, not destabilize them. But too often, our policies do the opposite. We believe that what makes our communities truly safer isn't unnecessary traffic stops for minor violations that risk escalating into excessive force, or barriers that make it hard to keep jobs after release. What makes us safer is providing opportunity and hope. HB 1510 does this by reducing racial disparities in traffic stops, improving success for people on probation and parole, and investing in our communities to promote racial equity.

It is our deeply-held belief that the people in the best position to solve problems are people who are most impacted by the problems. The Transforming Justice Bill came together as a result of a workgroup of stakeholders including people with lived experiences with the justice system. We are grateful for the labor and expertise of community members who played a major role in shaping these proposals.

We urge the committee's support for SB 1510. We believe the solutions in this bill move us closer to living in an Oregon where all of us can feel safe and thrive - and toward re-imagining a public safety system that works for all of us.

¹ Gamblin, Marylisa, Mass Incarceration: A Major Cause of Hunger. Bread for the World Institute, 2018
<https://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/downloads/briefing-paper-mass-incarceration-february-2018.pdf>

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