



February 13, 2024

Senator/Chair Jama, Senator/Vice-Chair Anderson, and Senate Committee Members for Housing and Development

Re: Support of Oregon Senate Bill 1530 (SB1530)

My name is Kent Barker, and I am the Lead Volunteer with the Furniture Bank of Salem Alliance Church that serves the Salem/Keizer area, where I have volunteered for the past six years.

I am representing a small group of 14 volunteers who go out every Saturday in our converted Franz Bread Truck to pick up donated used furniture and to deliver furniture to families and individuals in need of basic furniture items.

Since 2001, Furniture Bank has been serving families and individuals who are just getting into housing after being homeless, leaving an abusive domestic situation, getting out of incarceration, rehabilitation, or for other safety or emergency reasons. The families we serve are referred to us directly from social service case workers within the Salem/Keizer area.

Most families and individuals we have helped, literally had no furniture at all. They were sleeping on the floor. They didn't have a couch to sit on, a dresser to put clothes in, or a table & chairs to sit and eat at. Yes, they were finally able to get into housing, but it's not a home without furniture, and that is where Furniture Bank of Salem/Keizer has been trying to help through our volunteer, non-profit organization.

Last year (2023), we helped 338 families. Our volunteer team delivered, at no charge, furniture items to an average of 28 families a month. But the real number I want to share with you, is that we had to tell an average of 70 families a month that we did not have furniture items or beds that they needed. That's over 800 families last year we were unable to help. Our goal at the furniture Bank is that we help our vulnerable population get basic need furniture items to make their new space feel like home. And at the very minimum, ensure that "every head gets a bed" so they do not have to sleep on the floor.

I testify today along with colleagues and friends of mine from other Furniture Bank type organizations asking you to support and approve Senate Bill 1530, and more specifically Section 5 of this Senate Bill, which would provide funding for grants to non-profit organizations to donate reused household goods and furnishings to low-income residents across the State of Oregon.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony.

Sincerely,

Kent Barker