

February 14, 2024

To Senate Housing Committee Members,

Thank you Chair Jama and committee members for the opportunity to testify at yesterday's hearing.

As you have learned, furniture banks play a vital role in ensuring stability once housing is secured. Furnish Hope is the one of four furniture banks in Oregon, and the only furniture bank serving Central Oregon. Furniture banks like Furnish Hope address two critical issues in our communities.

First, we meet a fundamental and tangible need for individuals transitioning into stable housing. The affordable housing crisis has starkly exposed the gap between those with means and those without, magnifying one of the most pressing challenges faced by the unhoused: access to essential resources. At its core, it's about providing food, shelter, clothing, and furnishings. But it's also about fostering community. Those in need often experience profound isolation. They require companionship as they navigate the uphill battle toward security, safety, and a sense of belonging. Furniture banks open the doors of poverty, allowing us not only to deliver resources like beds, sofas, tables, and kitchenware but also to show up as caring neighbors and a supportive community. Through these efforts, lives are touched, and transformative changes occur. We break the cycles of homelessness, instability, and chaos, providing children in these homes with the opportunity to grow up in an environment of greater stability, security, and hope.

Second, we provide an avenue for every member of our community to contribute and make a difference. The greatness of towns, cities, and nations lies in the collective response of their communities to create positive change. Furniture banks offer everyone the chance to play a role in addressing the pervasive issues of homelessness and housing insecurity that plague our state. We provide something everyone needs—furniture, something everyone can provide—furniture, and something everyone yearns for—community.

To sustain our efforts and extend our reach to those currently underserved, all furniture banks require additional square footage for receiving donations, organizing goods and storage.

I invite you to envision a scenario: you're preparing to relocate and must pack up your entire household. What size U-Haul would you require? Perhaps a 14-footer, a 26-footer, or something larger?



320 SW Century Drive Suite 405-125
Bend, OR 97702

Now, consider the task of furnishing 50 homes within the next 30 days—a task we undertake each month at Furnish Hope. The sheer scale of this endeavor demands significant space. From receiving and sorting donations to organizing them, furnishing 50 homes necessitates ample square footage. Yet, despite the surplus of couches, beds, and kitchen tables awaiting donation, we face a glaring shortage of space to accommodate them. Consequently, families with children endure prolonged waits, sometimes spanning months or even years, residing in bare spaces before securing the essential furniture pieces that many of us take for granted.

There is an abundance of furniture being discarded, recycled, or turned over that could address this need in communities all across Oregon. Furniture banks require funding for sufficient space to seize these opportunities as they arise and provide these items with new homes.

Unfortunately, the common roadblock holding back all of our furniture banks from serving more people is space limitations. Operating from a 5,000 square foot warehouse, we can only furnish 50 homes monthly, leaving many families without the basics needed for stable home life. Salem Alliance Furniture Bank furnishes roughly 24 homes a month with 2,000 square feet. Community Warehouse in Portland furnishes approximately 220 homes a month with 15,000 square feet, and Albany Furniture Bank furnishes approximately 120 homes a month with 10,000 square feet.

Thank you for endorsing SB1530. The funding that comes from this bill will empower each of our furniture banks to significantly expand our operations. More space means extended donation receiving hours, making community contributions and item repurposing more accessible. The more items we receive, the more homes we are able to furnish, and the more lives we can impact with the hope of a more stable future.

Every Oregonian should have a place to call home, a place to create a stable future.

Thank you for your time and attention to learning about the important work we are doing throughout the state of Oregon to transform empty houses into welcoming homes.

With sincere gratitude,

Megan Martin

Furnish Hope | Founding Executive Director

megan@furnishhope.com