

February 2, 2024

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Urgent Support for Furniture Bank Services in Senate Bill #1530

To the Senate Committee on Housing and Development,

We, the undersigned agencies, express our wholehearted support for a yes vote on Senate Bill 1530, with the inclusion of funding for furniture bank services. As representatives of organizations deeply committed to addressing housing stability in all communities around Oregon, we strongly believe in recognizing the integral role of furniture in housing.

Our collective experience working with our neighbors facing homelessness and housing insecurity has highlighted a critical but often overlooked component of stable housing – the availability of essential furnishings. **We commend the legislature's focus on housing issues and believe that incorporating furniture bank services into the proposed bill is a vital step towards comprehensive housing solutions.**

The demand for furniture bank services has substantially increased in recent years, mirroring the escalating challenges associated with affordable housing and homelessness. **Individuals and families transitioning from homelessness and other adverse situations often lack the means to adequately furnish their homes,** hindering their ability to establish a comfortable and dignified living space. Furniture bank services are notably omitted from nearly all public housing funding, leaving housing agencies and their participants without the resources needed to furnish empty apartments.

Research consistently demonstrates the positive impact of furniture on housing stability. Furnished homes contribute to the physical and mental well-being of residents, fostering an environment conducive to recovery and growth. Studies indicate that individuals receiving furniture are more likely to maintain stable housing over time. Furniture banks provide an affordable, equitable, and sustainable solution to furniture poverty.

Housing should not be viewed merely as the provision of four walls and a roof, but as the establishment of a home – a space that supports the well-being and dignity of its occupants. Furniture and household items, as a fundamental element of any home, play a crucial role in this ecosystem. **When we fund housing, we must include the means to furnish those homes.** We urge you to support the inclusion of furniture bank services as an integral part of Senate Bill 1530.

The incorporation of furniture bank services into the legislative framework will not only address a critical need within our communities, but also contribute significantly to creating stable, sustainable, and thriving living environments for all Oregonians.

We appreciate the commitment of the Senate to finding and funding holistic solutions to our state's housing challenges. **Together, let us build a future where every individual and family has not only a space to live, but a home to thrive.**

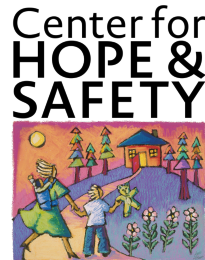
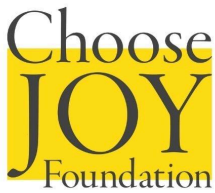
Sincerely,



Referring Partner Agencies:



Catholic Community Services





Case Manager and Client Advocate Testimonials:

Name, title, and organization name	Words of encouragement or testimonials about the importance of furniture bank services
Molly Hogan, Executive Director, Welcome Home Coalition	People will not stay housed if they do not have the items inside their dwelling that truly make a home, a home. If we want people to be housed safely and with dignity, we must invest in ensuring everyone has access to furniture and household essentials.
Andre Jaurigui, housing program specialist, Impact NW	Community Warehouse and similar services are essential in providing equitable housing resources to people who are just getting out of homelessness. These resources make a huge difference to clients
Mandee Campos, Housing Program Manager, Janus Youth Programs	In my work, we house young parents with 18 months of rental assistance (usually the birthing parent) who are homelessness and/or fleeing domestic violence. These are usually teen or young adults moving into their first apartment. Resources like community warehouse and other furniture bank services have been essential to these families to start a new chapter with basic household essentials. The majority of these families do not have items to put in their new apartments.
Meg Cody, Lead Case Manager, Bybee Lakes Hope Center	This service supports people transitioning into long-term, permanent housing -- it provides access to much-needed resources!
Tova Hershman, Housing Access Assistant Director	Many of the clients we help move and exit homelessness absolutely depend on our local furniture bank to furnish their new home! They get essential items like mattresses, dishes, bedding, heaters, etc.
Dawn Netupsky, program coordinator, Family Support and Connections	This service makes all the difference to low income families that are starting over and would otherwise not be able to afford the basic necessities of everyday living.
Heather Romero, Program Manager, Project Patchwork	Furniture Bank funding is imperative in the fight to get people off the streets. Use common sense, make the right choice and pass this bill.
Chelsea Farleigh, caseworker, ODHS child welfare	I have had the pleasure of watching numerous parents graduate treatment or gain access to housing, have their children returned, and start over in a new living space. Being able to furnish the apartment for a child's return is indescribable. Access to furniture is something many take for granted but having a designated bed for your child to sleep in, having a couch to watch movies together, or having a dining room table to cook family meals is life changing.

<p>Yasmin (Yaz) Wigfall, Homevisitor and Advocate, Janus Youth Programs- Insights (SEEDS program)</p>	<p>Community Warehouse has been a HUGE support with the families we serve. Many of these pregnant youth and young families rarely have support for furnacing their first home since many expenses go to supporting their babies and themselves. Without this resource, these families would have a dresser to store clothes and baby supplies, plates and kitchen appliances to feed their families, and couches for babies and children to sit on instead of bare floor.</p>
<p>Kalyna Korok (IRCO) Immigrant Refugee Community Organization</p>	<p>This would greatly benefit and help a lot of families in need.</p>
<p>Madison Ray, Program Coordinator, Community Warehouse</p>	<p>I work directly with the families that are receiving furniture and services at Community Warehouse and it is always the best feeling to see people turn their new places into homes with our support. More funding would allow us to serve so many more people in our community and provide them with the furnishings they're seeking.</p>
<p>Mr. Craig Vaughn, Albina Head Start</p>	<p>Our Albina Head Start organization has had a partnership with "The Community Warehouse" program for decades. Very appreciative.</p>
<p>Sylvia Lopez- Coordinator, Community Warehouse</p>	<p>It is really important for us here at Community Warehouse to continue to serve the families in need.. a quote from a 9 yr old little girl who came into the warehouse with her mom to pick out furniture and she tells the case manager, "its not even my birthday and we got all these things for our house, I am so happy". Helping these families is everything to us.</p>
<p>Ina Howe, Employment Case Manager, Oregon Tradeswomen</p>	<p>This valuable resource needs our support to continue to provide the supportive, compassionate, organized service, that provides well for their employees.</p>
<p>Serena Howell, Housing Placement Manager, JOIN</p>	<p>The need for accessing furniture bank services is critical in the Portland metro area. Once someone that has experienced chronic houselessness, is approved for housing and reaches the joyous day of move-in, it is essential for individuals to receive access to furniture to make their housing a welcoming and comfortable environment. With the growing cost of living, it is all the more urgent to include funding for community-based partnerships such as furniture banks, so that we can provide access to affordable household goods. I have truly valued our partnership with Community Warehouse over the years and they are a stronghold in our community. I fully support the inclusion of furniture bank services in SB 1530!!</p>
<p>Tiffany Eggleton, Lead Domestic Violence Recovery Mentor, Raphael House of Portland</p>	<p>As a survivor I had to utilize Community Warehouse when my kids and I left everything to escape our abuser. It was so important and amazing the support we got in creating our new transition together as a family. I work with hundreds of survivors in the same situation and Community Warehouse has helped so many families I personally work with and in our community. Please pass this Bill, the need is great in our community and families deserve this help.</p>

<p>Maylorie Townsend Success Coach Portland Community College</p>	<p>The low income students I have supported who needed furniture were often single mothers who had to leave their communities and families to keep themselves and their families safe from abusers. With nothing and no Community, they restarted their lives and could not afford beds and other needed items for themselves and their children. Community Warehouse has been a huge asset for these families.</p>
<p>Bethany Katter, Advocacy Services Manager, Raphael House of Portland</p>	<p>Furniture banks are the final step in getting someone housed. It turns an apartment into a home and means that families can focus on the next stage of their journey and healing.</p>
<p>Ali Lux- Health Coordinator Assistant</p>	<p>Community warehouse has helped so many of our families throughout the years and is a crucial resource for this community.</p>
<p>Candi Balabon Peer Supervisor Columbia Community Mental Health</p>	<p>Life changing for people to be successful</p>
<p>Lauren Brimmer Case Manager/DV Advocate YWCA</p>	<p>Many of my clients have recently left their abusers and moved into a home of their own. They often leave with nothing, and often don't even have a bed. Without furniture banks, like Community Warehouse, I don't know what they'd do.</p>
<p>Jill Orr, Executive Director, Clackamas Service Center</p>	<p>Clackamas Service Center strongly relies on furniture bank services and those partnerships to support our unhoused clients getting settled as soon as they get housing.</p>
<p>Ivette Uribe, Bilingual Family Support Specialist, Insights young parent services--Janus Youth</p>	<p>I am currently working with a family who was able to make their house into a home for the holidays. They were housed in late October, early November and were able to decorate and furnish with basic needs in time to enjoy the holidays in a cozy and welcoming home. They continue to enjoy the furniture that community warehouse was able to provide. We need this service for our community and it continues to be of high priority to us to be able to continue to offer these services to the people whom we work with and live with in our communities.</p>
<p>Sara Young, Case Manager, MHAAO</p>	<p>Assisting individuals with building their life in recovery to transition off of street level living, or in the process of completing treatment services being available to more people would assist with better outcomes in my experience.</p>
<p>Morgan Lyons, Behavioral Health Outpatient Manager, Outside In</p>	<p>Without furniture banks, many of my clients wouldn't be have what they need to make any housing they secure useable. I've worked with many folks who moved into housing and then slept on the floor for weeks before they could secure a furniture bank appointment. I can't understate how essential these services are in keeping people in housing.</p>

<p>Rachel Mohr, Personal Agent, Community Pathways</p>	<p>Community Warehouse has helped provided furniture and furnishings for several of my clients who were homeless and getting their own homes, often for the first time. An apartment is an apartment. A house is a house. But what makes a home is the people, memories, and furnishings. You cannot fully live well, if you don't have a bed to sleep on, or sheets, comforters and pillows. You cannot properly prepare meals, if you don't have the right kitchen utensils, pots, and pans, and even microwaves. We often don't think about the after - the after they move into a new place after being homeless. Shelter is important, but also are the necessities that come along with having a home. Furniture is essential for a home for many reasons such as storage, comfort, completing daily activities, and functionality.</p> <p>I highly support furniture banks and I hope you take this all into consideration when considering the passing of this senate bill.</p>
<p>Lyudmila Boatman, Housing Program Specialist II, Impact NW.</p>	<p>I have seen first hand how much of an impact it makes on a newly housed family when their home is furnished. It relieves so much stress, financial burden, and provides dignity.</p>
<p>Stacey Witte, Executive Director REACH OUT NP</p>	<p>Furnish Hope offers a vital service. They not only offer furnishings but hope for so many people.</p>
<p>Sheccid/ Bilingual Retention Worker/ JOIN</p>	<p>The invaluable support offered by furniture bank services plays a pivotal role in empowering individuals as they transition into new homes. By providing essential furnishings and helping those who have experienced homelessness to stabilize and rebuild, these services are crucial in ensuring long-term housing stability.</p>
<p>Colleen Sinsky, Executive Director, Central Oregon FUSE</p>	<p>As an affordable housing provider, I want to highlight the indispensable role of furniture bank services in our collective efforts to end homelessness in our community. In my 14 years dedicated to transitioning Oregonians from homelessness to permanent housing, I have seen hundreds of families' lives changed forever through the dignity and stability of having a furnished home of their own - an accomplishment only made possible by our furniture bank partners.</p> <p>Though not as visible as shelters or rental assistance programs, furniture banks are an absolutely critical component of Oregon's strategy to tackle homelessness and the affordable housing shortage. Their support is frequently paired with state-funded housing efforts like the "rapid rehousing" resources through Executive Order 23-02 to enable stable housing placements.</p> <p>I urge you to support Senate Bill 1530, acknowledging and bolstering a vital element of our comprehensive approach to ending homelessness. The passage of this bill is a crucial step forward in ensuring that more families can benefit from the foundational support provided by furniture banks, fostering stability and hope for a better future. Thank you.</p>

Haseeb Hamidi, Community Engagement Specialist, Afghan Support Network	"Furniture banks provide an invaluable service, transforming empty spaces into warm, welcoming homes for those in need. Witnessing the joy and relief on the faces of families as they select items to furnish their new homes is a reminder of the profound impact these services have. It's not just about the furniture; it's about restoring dignity, providing comfort, and supporting stability for those emerging from challenging circumstances. The importance of furniture bank services cannot be overstated, especially in these times when the need is so great. Oregon Senate Bill 1530 represents a beacon of hope for many, ensuring that individuals and families transitioning into permanent housing can truly make their house a home. Let's stand together to support this vital initiative."
Ruin Riggs, Assistant program and resource specialist at WeShine	Furniture banks have been a tremendous help in making sure villagers who leave us for permanent housing are equipped to be as comfortable as they can. This is especially important because extreme poverty, up to and including homelessness, are traumatic to experience, and I've met people who have been homeless for years. As a worker in homeless services I want my people to have what they need in order to thrive, and not just survive.
JOIN	The community warehouse offers high quality, cost saving access to home furnishings. Everyone wins - housing service providers, low-income households and donors! Please support this amazing organization, it's a sensible investment for all .
Children Family & Community Connections	From Veterans, Homeless, to TANF clients and individuals reestablishing themselves into society have been dependent on these resources! Please support them!
Housing Works FSS Program Manager	This service allows low-income families to avoid the debt trap of having to finance furniture to meet their basic needs. A roof over your head is great, but having a pillow to lay your head on is just as important.
Alaina Elwyn, Family Partnership Advocate, Tigard-Tualatin Family Resource Center	I am so thankful to Community Warehouse for helping my families furnish their homes. Being able to afford an apartment/house is difficult enough, and it's wonderful that these families don't have to worry about spending as much money afterwards when it comes to furniture. This is a tangible, meaningful way to positively impact the lives of families in our community.
Priscilla Peduzzi	Community Warehouse supports families to get back on their feet as they are coming out of homelessness. Funding for programs like this helps solidify people's stability and prevents them from going back into a houseless situation.
Meg Bender, Housing Case Manager, Impact NW	Furniture banks are so so needed. Our program is unable to pay for new furniture and we work on housing literally homeless individuals and families. It is so amazing to be able to furnish an apartment or house with great quality items. I love Community Warehouse!!
Montserrat Shepherd, Senior Case Manager, Multnomah County Behavioral Health Department	The positive impact that Community Warehouse has made in Portland is unmeasurable giving access to people to start over providing low cost furniture.

Daisy Ruiz, Family Partnership Advocate, Tigard Tualatin School District	Words can't begin to express what a difference having Community Warehouse has made to our newly homed families. Being able to have a provide them with a bed to sleep on, a place to eat with your family, all with the care and compassion that Community Warehouse staff give. Big thanks!!
Sarah Carlson, Medical Social Worker	I work in social services in Portland and we desperately need these resources. Thank you for your support.
Nelly Mandujano, Family Partnership Advocate, TTSD	Community Warehouse is an amazing resource and support to many families. Looking back at the many times families received support from this organization I am not sure that these families would have had any other option to obtain furniture and other household items. I really hope that CW receives this grant.
Sonya Newstrom CADC1 QMHAR Housing Specialist NARA	I find the need to take clients to this agency for help with furniture when they are moving in. Most of my clients are being housed after being on the streets and have nothing to sleep on or use in their new home.
Evelyn McLean, Home Visitor, Insights Young Parenting Program	As a social worker working with young parents, if our clients are able to get housing we frequently refer them to the single furniture bank in Portland that can help them get set up to actually live in their new places. Without these services many families would be without the essential elements of living -a desk, a chair, a bed, a table - the objects that can make an empty someone's new home.
Victory Hall, Program Coordinator, REACH CDC	Without the option of having furniture bank services, many residents would live without the bare necessities they need to make a meal, take a shower, or have a place to sit in their home not to mention sleep. They are starting with nothing in most cases. This gives them the beginning they need to sustain their housing. These services are vital.
Jenny Salo, SSVF Program Supervisor, Impact NW	CW is the first step to stabilizing our clients once they have been approved for housing. It's a huge resource that our clients need to be successful in permanent housing.
Courtney Richardson Family service worker Head Start	The Community Warehouse has furnished so many of my families homes. Families That were previously homeless, or staying in shelters. The joy the families get out of having the Opportunity to furnish their homes for their families. I can't imagine how many families will end up struggling to furnish their homes if the Community Warehouse is unable to support the community the way they do. I support the Community Warehouse.
Cheree Carr,Case Mgr, CCC-Old Town Recovery Center	It is a blessing to have an organization who helps others get back on there feet. I was one of them today Today with God Grace I have 10 yrs Clean,a good job,family & Friends. When I bring clients to the Community warehouse and they get to pick out what is needed for there home . There is a light that goes off in them they leave grateful and with Hope.
Ankita Gupta, Family Housing Advocate, Native American Youth and Family Center	We have many families (previously houseless) who greatly benefited from having access to furniture banks as they could not otherwise afford furnishing their new permanent homes.

<p>Emmy Ritter, Executive Director, Raphael House of Portland</p>	<p>Furniture banks are critical partners in our work serving survivors of domestic violence. Families transitioning out of our shelter and into safe new homes are often starting over with nothing. It's thanks to our partnership with Community Warehouse here in Portland that survivors can pick out the necessities – like beds, seating, lighting, and dressers – that make an empty space into a warm home.</p> <p>Our agency doesn't have the infrastructure or capacity to manage donations, storage, and transport of these large items. We rely on partners like Community Warehouse to connect families with these essential furnishings, and are grateful for the phenomenal service their agency provides.</p> <p>We strongly support Section 5 of SB 1530 and funding for nonprofit furniture banks across our state, which are a critical aspect of housing stability services.</p>
<p>Peter Preciado, Case Manager, Bienestar de la Familia, Multnomah County YFS</p>	<p>These services have helped victims of domestic violence furnish a new home safely, when they've had to leave everything behind for their family's safety.</p>
<p>Victor Romo/Family Partnership Advocate/TTSD</p>	<p>Community Warehouse has proven to be an invaluable resource for families who are new to the school district or transitioning into independent living after experiencing periods of housing instability. This support is particularly vital for our low-income families, given the prohibitive costs of furniture in today's market. Many families find themselves unable to afford these essential items, making Community Warehouse a crucial asset.</p> <p>The impact of this resource extends beyond providing furniture; it plays a significant role in creating a stable and supportive environment for families who have faced housing challenges. By alleviating the financial burden associated with furnishing a home, Community Warehouse contributes to the overall well-being and dignity of these families.</p> <p>We are truly grateful for the assistance provided by Community Warehouse, as it aligns with our commitment to ensuring that every family, regardless of their financial circumstances, has the opportunity to establish a comfortable and welcoming home. The partnership with Community Warehouse is a testament to our shared dedication to the welfare of our students and their families.</p> <p>Thank you for your ongoing support and for making a positive impact on the lives of those in our community.</p>
<p>ROSE Community Development</p>	<p>ROSE is a nonprofit affordable housing organization and our residents often rely on the Community Warehouse as a furniture provider. Several of our households lost furniture as a result of frozen pipes bursting in the recent winter storm. Furniture banking is a vital service that deserves public support.</p>