

Chair Jama and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development,

My name is Anna Kurnizki, and I am the Executive Director of Community Warehouse. I want to thank Senate President Wagner for his support and advocacy, and Senator Jama, the Housing Committee, and the entire legislature for focusing on solutions for housing and wrap-around services. I support a YES vote on Senate Bill 1530, with the inclusion of funding for furniture bank services.

Community Warehouse is the only nonprofit furniture bank serving the greater Portland metro area, and one of 4 known furniture banks in Oregon. As social service agencies and housing providers in our region help their participants move into housing, they rely on Community Warehouse to offer a positive and dignified shopping experience for their clients to pick out furniture and household items. Our inventory is made up of donations from the community - including mattresses and box springs, sofas and rugs, tables and chairs, dressers and nightstands, pots and pans, towels and blankets - the basics needed to turn an empty space into a comfortable, functional home. We redistribute 600 tons of donated furnishings a year, and furnish 60 homes every week.

Community Warehouse has experienced a massive increase in demand as housing costs rise and our region invests in solutions to homelessness. **It's a simple equation: the more folks move into housing, the more need furniture.** We've increased services by 240% since the pandemic, but our appointments are booked out for nearly *2 months*, and we field calls daily from clients who we do not have the capacity to serve. These are our neighbors who have overcome traumatic situations such as domestic violence, homelessness, or a house fire, that are having to start over in empty housing. This is a huge barrier to stability and success.

Fortunately, furniture banks offer an affordable and sustainable solution. And SB 1530 provides a timely opportunity to invest in furniture banks around Oregon. **When we invest in housing and the means to furnish that housing, we are contributing to positive home environments and reducing the risk of people returning to homelessness due to a continued struggle to feel stabilized in housing.**

One of our Board members who used to be a case manager said that when she did home visits, she could tell how stable her client was by whether they had a trash can in their kitchen or a plastic bag hanging off the counter. To have a broom and a dustpan to clean your space, to have shelves to organize your things, to have a sofa to gather at or rest - these are the things that give us dignity, and make us feel human.

Furniture banks in Oregon meet a demonstrated need, they save our communities money, they lower waste, and they offer an affordable and proven method to helping our neighbors stay housed. We need your support to pass SB 1530 so we can scale up services and ensure Oregonians overcoming crisis situations have the comfort and dignity of a furnished home.

Testimonies from partner agencies:

Outside In: “Without furniture banks, many of my clients wouldn't have what they need to make any housing they secure usable. 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.”

Community Pathways: “Community Warehouse has helped provide furniture and furnishings for several of my clients who were homeless and getting their own homes, often for the first time. **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. 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. I highly support furniture banks and I hope you take this into consideration when considering the passing of this senate bill.”

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."