

TO: Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
FROM: Leann Knapp, Oregon Food Bank
RE: **Support HB 3115 to Further Decriminalize Homelessness**
DATE: May 4, 2021



Chair Prozanksi and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Leann Knapp, my pronouns are she/her, and I am here today representing the Oregon Food Bank. Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 11 Oregonians were food insecure. **In 2020, 1 in 4 of our neighbors faced hunger**¹ – a dramatic increase driven by the public health and economic fallout of COVID-19. These increases make it more important than ever that this Legislative Session we pass policies that will support our communities to emerge stronger from this crisis.

At Oregon Food Bank, we know that both **hunger and homelessness are symptoms of harmful policies and systems** that create barriers for people to thrive, and that we can only emerge stronger when we address them together, as a community. That is why **we reject the criminalization of poverty**. Poverty is one of the greatest drivers of both hunger and homelessness in our communities – a reality many Oregonians know too well. **We cannot allow acts of survival, resourcefulness, and resilience to be met with threats of arrest or violence**. This is especially true for communities of color and our trans and gender non-conforming neighbors, for whom the disproportionate impact of harm in potential enforcement interactions is well-documented.

Oregon Food Bank communities envision a future where everyone can access employment, education, housing and healthcare. Each of us here today has our own role in making that a reality, but as we work to build that vision, people without housing should not be penalized for trying to survive. House Bill 3115 is based on these basic principles and community values. It would bring clarity and **guidance for local governments** as they manage outdoor public spaces and would ensure that Oregon's cities have **reasonable ordinances** that take into account the needs of people experiencing homelessness

Oregon Food Bank strongly urges your support for House Bill 3115. We believe this piece of legislation is an important step in protecting some of our most vulnerable communities while we work toward larger systemic solutions to homelessness and hunger.

We thank you for your dedication and your willingness to join Oregon Food Bank in building communities that never go hungry.

¹<https://today.oregonstate.edu/news/new-osu-report-shows-about-25-oregilians-experienced-food-insecurity-2020>

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