



DATE: March 2, 2023  
TO: Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Transportation and Econ. Development  
FROM: Sammi Teo, Public Policy Advocate  
RE: Support for SB 5511, Emergency Rent Assistance & Eviction Prevention

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Co-Chairs Senator Woods and Representative Gomberg, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today; and we advocate to change policies that drive hunger and poverty.

### **Food security and stable housing go hand-in-hand.**

At Oregon Food Bank, we know that the best solutions to end food insecurity come from those of us who have experienced hunger and poverty first-hand. And over the course of many years working in communities that disproportionately face food insecurity, we have heard loud and clear that the lack of affordable housing in Oregon is a primary reason why more than one in eight kids in Oregon lives in a household that struggles to afford food.

Everyone deserves a safe, stable place to call home. The well-being of our communities depends on whether this basic need is met. According to the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis, [more than 50% of Oregon renters do not have enough money left over](#) after rent to pay for food, medicine, and other basic necessities. That means too many Oregon families are living on the edge and are one missed paycheck, high health care or car repair bill, or other setback away from losing their housing. A recent report from Oregon State University found that Oregonians who are [renters are six times more likely to experience hunger than Oregonians who are homeowners](#). Too many Oregonians are forced to choose between feeding their families or losing everything to eviction. It's time to do better.

### **Rental assistance keeps people housed, keeps families stable, keeps children in the classroom, and prevents homelessness.**

We are extremely grateful to Governor Kotek, legislative leadership, and this committee for recognizing the importance of moving swiftly with an urgent homelessness package to begin to address immediate needs.

\$100 million in funding for emergency rent assistance and eviction prevention to community action agencies and culturally specific programs across the state is an essential element of homelessness prevention. These funds are necessary because of our high rate of homelessness, low availability and high cost of rental housing, chronic disparities in

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homeownership, and the economic uncertainty that Oregon renters continue to live under. We are facing an extreme housing crisis in our state, with unprecedented levels of need in urban and rural areas across the state.

Oregon is 4th in the nation of people per capita experiencing homelessness, according to the most recent national study<sup>1</sup>, which is not surprising as we also have the 4th lowest rental vacancy rate in the country<sup>2</sup> and **Oregon renters pay the ninth highest rent in the country** based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development<sup>3</sup>. In Oregon, **more than 86% of all court evictions are due to a missed rent payment**. The situation is more serious for Black Oregonians who are 30% less likely to be homeowners and more likely to be renters due to the legacy of policies that blocked Black people from purchasing and owning property in our state.<sup>4</sup>

Rental assistance keeps people housed, keeps families stable, keeps children in the classroom, and prevents homelessness. This is a smart investment today that will avoid higher human, financial, and societal costs later.

**We strongly urge passage of \$100 million in emergency rental assistance and eviction prevention resources.** Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> [U.S. HUD analysis on Oregon's homeless population.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Rental Vacancy Rates.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Oregon Rent Prices report.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Black homeownership gap in Oregon.](#)