



March 27, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development
From: Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Re: Support for SB 611

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ames Kessler-Templin and I am submitting testimony in support of SB 611 on behalf of Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon (PHFO).

PHFO is a statewide anti-poverty advocacy organization with a small staff of under 15 members. We understand that leadership comes from those with lived experience and that hunger and poverty do not exist on their own, but rather a result of overlapping systems of oppression that create layers of privilege and inequity. Our values and work are centered in creating systemic changes to end hunger. At PHFO, we do not seek to just feed our neighbors, we seek our shared liberation from systems of oppression and to address the root causes of hunger. One of those causes is lack of affordable housing.

In 2019-2021, renters had a food insecurity rate of 20.6%, while the rate was significantly lower for homeowners at 4.4%, leaving renters almost 5x more likely to face food insecurity than homeowners¹. Under current law, 2023 rent increases for properties older than 15 years is 14.6%. That is too high for anyone to afford, outpacing wages and Social Security, and will result in increased high-rent evictions. When people have to vacate due to no fault of their own, Oregon's tight and expensive rental market makes it hard to quickly find a new home. We've heard from community that when our neighbors don't have access to affordable housing or face eviction because of rent spikes, it makes every-day errands such as grocery shopping all the more stressful. No one should have to worry about where their next meal is coming from or how they will afford it, and providing Oregonians and their families with affordable housing can help reduce this stress.

The rent increase reports from across Oregon show the great need for SB 611. Studies show that just a \$100 increase in median rents in a community is tied to a 9% increase in homelessness in that community. At a time when Oregon is experiencing some of the highest rates of homelessness in the nation, we cannot afford to let rent spikes go unchecked.

Oregon's housing emergency goes beyond lack of supply and the number of people living without homes or shelter. We have a rental emergency as well, with tenants living just one rent increase notice away from displacement and possible homelessness. Without SB 611 and the other homelessness

¹

https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/2022-11/oregon_food_insecurity_rates_2019-2021.pdf

prevention bills to stop abusive landlord practices, Oregon's success in addressing the housing crisis is at grave risk.

This is why we urge you to pass SB 611 as soon as possible. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Ames Kessler-Templin
Legislative Strategist
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon