

TO: Senate Committee on Housing and Development
FROM: Juan Soto, Volunteer Coordinator and Organizer
RE: Support for SB 603
DATE: February 23, 2023



Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. In pursuit of our mission, we advocate to change policies that drive hunger and poverty.

We don't just view hunger as an individual experience. In our work, we center those who most disproportionately experience hunger as a direct result of systemic injustices - Black, Indigenous and all People of Color, immigrants and refugees, trans and gender-nonconforming individuals, and single mothers and caregivers. And through this work, we've heard time and again that the high cost of housing is a primary driver of food insecurity. [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 and other basic necessities.](#)

Evidence shows us that providing unrestricted cash assistance is one of the most effective ways to reduce food and housing insecurity. In 2021, the federal monthly Child Tax Credit reduced food insufficiency by 26%. Sadly, this credit expired at the end of 2021.

SB 603 Removes Barriers to Housing Assistance

Currently only one out of every four Oregonians with low incomes receives help paying the rent from federal programs such as Section 8. SB 603 removes barriers to assistance for renters by:

- Establishing a demonstration program that provides unrestricted cash assistance to recipients who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or are severely rent burdened;
- Studying the long term effects of cash assistance programs and report findings to the legislature;
- Requiring the Department of Human Services to submit a legislative concept for a long term cash assistance program.

It's important to note that certain communities are disproportionately impacted by food and housing insecurity not because of individual failings, but as a result of [racist policies that have excluded many from social safety net programs in the past, including cash assistance](#). SB 603 centers racial justice by prioritizing historically harmed communities for participation in the program. **We urge you to vote 'yes' on SB 603. Thank you for your time.**

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