

TO: House Committee on Housing  
FROM: Leann Knapp, Oregon Food Bank  
RE: **Support HB 2842 for Healthy Homes**  
DATE: February 11, 2021



Chair Fahey and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 11 Oregonians were food insecure. **In 2020, one in four Oregonians faced hunger — a dramatic increase.** And the public health and economic impacts of the pandemic have fallen hardest on people who have faced systemic inequities for generations: communities of color, immigrants and refugees, single parents and caregivers, and our trans and gender non-conforming neighbors.

**The connections between housing and hunger are clear.** Housing - both its accessibility and cost - is one of the most common reasons cited for needing to access food assistance through the Oregon Food Bank. In 2020, A staggering 53% of renters reported cutting back on food or medicine to pay for rent.

**Every Oregonian should have a healthy home.** Yet 54% of Oregonians live in housing built before 1978 that is energy-inefficient and in need of repairs, weatherproofing, and upgrades for disaster resiliency. People living in energy inefficient homes experience sick days and hospital visits caused by mold, cold weather, and an inability to take refuge from bad outdoor air quality. We now know that people who breathe polluted air are at greater risk of severe cases of COVID-19.

**HB 2842 creates a Healthy Homes program** at the Oregon Healthy Authority to provide grants to eligible entities that provide financial assistance to persons in low income households to repair and rehabilitate their residences and to landlords to repair and rehabilitate dwelling units.

Creating and funding a Healthy Homes program is a step toward equity for our communities and makes good fiscal sense for our state. HB 2842 will:

- Help low-income families spend less money on heating and cooling;
- Create good local jobs in retrofitting and repairs;
- Provide a refuge from increasingly bad outdoor air quality;
- Reduce burden on hospitals and families by supporting better respiratory health; and
- Reduce the number of sick days for both adults and kids.

**Oregon Food Bank urges support for HB 2842.** We have the opportunity to rebuild and emerge stronger. This is our moment to embrace our shared values, care for each other and take bold action in support of *all* Oregonians.

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