

Joint Statement in Opposition to SB 241

March 8, 2023

Chair Gelser Blouin and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

The undersigned organizations respectfully join in this **statement of opposition to SB 241**, which would impose administrative burdens on state agencies and local governments, as well as create significant barriers to assistance for low-income and vulnerable Oregonians.

SB 241 would require state agencies and local governments to add 2 significant stages to their process of administering assistance programs for Oregonians in dire need of shelter, housing, employment, health care, child care, food, clothing, or other basic necessities. *Before* providing any assistance, the bill would require state agencies or local governments to:

- Make a determination as to whether an applicant not only qualifies for the program for which they are applying, but also to fully inform and determine whether a participant is eligible for additional programs for which they may not have expertise or the ability to make determinations; and
- Force applicants to apply for or enroll in a similar or related federal program of assistance or benefits, which is likely to cause unnecessary frustration and delays in benefit issuance.

Our state's social assistance programs are an important means of protecting low-income communities in Oregon and mitigating the extent of socioeconomic health and wealth inequities. As inflation and the cost of living are far out-pacing wage growth, more and more people are struggling to meet their basic needs, and we have one of the highest rates of homelessness in the nation.

We affirm that providing helpful information to Oregonians about additional information about resources that may be available - such as a referral to 211info - is a good idea. But **SB 241 would impose extra barriers to people seeking assistance in ways that are not trauma-informed, will likely lead to unnecessary frustration, and make the jobs of our social services providers harder and more time consuming.** Our interventions this session should be designed to prioritize the removal of barriers to accessing assistance, and the easing of administrative burdens in distributing assistance. For these reasons we join together in a respectful statement of opposition to SB 241.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

211info
ASSIST Program
Children's Institute
City of Portland
Community Action Partnership of Oregon
Family Forward Oregon
Innovation Law Lab
League of Oregon Cities
Multnomah County
Neighborhood Partnerships
Oregon Academy of Family Physicians
Oregon Center for Public Policy

Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Law Center
Oregon Women's Rights Coalition
Our Children Oregon
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Project Access NOW
SEIU Local 503
SO Health-E, the Southern Oregon
Regional Health Equity Coalition
We Can Do Better

