

TO: House Committee on Rules
FROM: Leann Knapp, Oregon Food Bank
RE: **Support SB 278 to Fight the Housing & Hunger Crisis**
DATE: June 14, 2021



Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Leann Knapp (she/her) and I write to you representing Oregon Food Bank. Throughout the pandemic we hope the message from the OFB community has come through loud and clear: **The overlapping public health and economic crises we have weathered have caused a precipitous increase in hunger in every corner of our state, and the only way out is through systemic change.**

This session you have taken bold action to protect Oregon renters and keep more people in our communities housed. Yet, as we near July 1 and the end of the eviction moratorium, **our work is not done and we cannot lose sight of a recovery where we rebuild and emerge stronger.**

The Oregon Emergency Rental Assistance Program (OERAP) is a critical element to the next phase of recovery for our state. Since it became available, over 8,000 households have already applied for assistance - 70% of applicants are requesting support for July rent and many earn nearly half the median income for their area. **As a result of systemic racism, Black, Indigenous and People of Color are disproportionately represented in rental assistance applications, making up 24% of Oregon's population, but at least 50% of applications.** The data reveals extreme inequities for Black renters.

Despite Oregon's efforts thus far, we simply need more time to get rental assistance in the hands of applicants. **We need more time to prevent a mass wave of evictions - and hunger.** We must enact Senate Bill 278 to protect those who have applied for rental assistance from being evicted for non-payment until the state can allocate the funds to help them. Senate Bill 278 would:

- Protect a tenant from eviction for nonpayment for 60 days only if they have applied for rental assistance,
- Require submitted documentation to landlords that a tenant has applied for rental assistance,
- Give our state more time to ensure rental assistance funds get to the Oregonians who need them.

Oregon Food Bank strongly urges your YES on Senate Bill 278 to see through our collective work to keep Oregonians housed and fed. Thank you for your dedication and your willingness to join us in building communities that never go hungry.

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