



Feb 18, 2019

House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 608

Chair Fagan, Vice Chair Noble, Vice Chair Sanchez and members of the committee

Oregon Food Bank believes that no one should be hungry and that hunger starves the human spirit. We provide food assistance to anyone who needs it through our network of regional food banks, pantries and emergency meal sites. In an average month, an estimated 260,000 people in Oregon and Clark County, Washington receive food from a pantry.

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to end hunger and its root causes. We know that the nexus between housing and hunger is strong. Clients increasingly tell us that they have to make the tough choice between rent and food. They speak of ever-increasing rents, fear of evictions and the inability to find an affordable place to call home. Some speak of becoming homeless for the first time because they cannot find an affordable place to live.

Last week, I was at Faith Café, a Washington County hot meal site. As our neighbors and community members ate turkey tetrazzini and green beans, we chatted about their lives and what brought them to Faith Café. Many of them cannot come to Salem at 3pm on a Tuesday so we wanted to share their stories and experiences. Many of them spoke of rents being too high and wages not keeping up. Sharele told me that after living in the same apartment for 18 years, she received a no-cause eviction and struggled to find a new place to live. Gerald, a senior, spoke about the challenges of living on a fixed income with rising rents and was worried about his ability to continue to provide for himself and his family. Brett, a volunteer who is also a swing shift driver for TriMet, spoke about seeing the same people ride his bus every night to stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer. He told me they had no other place to go.

Everywhere we go the message is the same: people are hungry for housing and tired of waiting for those with the means to make a decision.

Across Oregon, people are being forced out of their homes due to no cause evictions and extreme rent increases. They are being forced to make the tough choice between paying their rent or putting food on the table to feed their family. People cannot wait any longer for these essential protections. We urge the Oregon Legislature to adopt SB 608. Our friends and neighbors who rent their homes deserve at least this basic level of protection, and we should act now to implement these fundamentals.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Anneliese Koehler
Public Policy Advocate, Oregon Food Bank

