

SB 430 Testimony

Senate Finance and Revenue Committee

March 6, 2013

John Burt

Executive Director, Farmers Ending Hunger

Good afternoon. I am John Burt, Dallas, Oregon, and I am the Executive Director of Farmers Ending Hunger an Oregon non-profit corporation. I am in this position after a 33 year career with Oregon State University Extension Service and also serving for the past 18 years on the board of Marion Polk Food Share in Salem. Farmers Ending Hunger came about because the founder, Fred Ziari, when confronted with the hunger statistics in Oregon about eight years ago came to the conclusion: "Who better to feed hungry people than farmers". Fred felt that if asked, farmers would respond to the challenge. They have.

Over the past six years Oregon farmers and ranchers have donated 9.7 million pounds of high quality food commodities to Farmers Ending Hunger. After processing the net result has been about 6.7 million pounds of finished products delivered to Oregon Food Bank. Last year the farmers and ranchers donated 1.8 million pounds to us. The composition of these donations included about 500,000 pounds of potatoes, 300,000 pounds of onions, 250 head of cattle, 400,000 pounds of processed vegetables, 46,000 pounds of fresh vegetables, 175,000 pounds of pancake mix and 26,000 pounds of fresh fruit.

Not ones to stand still, Fred and the board of Farmers Ending Hunger have set a goal for 2013 of doubling this amount. With this goal in mind we have every reason to be here in support of SB 430.

I have to say first that no farmer who has been asked to donate has ever asked me about the tax consequences or if their donation is tax deductible. They donate because they get the idea of feeding hungry people better than most. However, if we are going to meet our goal and if we are going to keep up with the increasing demand on Oregon Food Bank's resources, honestly we could use a little help here.

I believe that SB 430 will help for several reasons:

- First, it will provide some relief to the bottom line to these farming and ranching businesses. We are asking a lot of them financially and their ability to donate depends on them being healthy businesses.
- A new tax deduction will give us a reason to reach out to farmers and ranchers and will create a buzz around the hunger issue. It may be the one new thing that gets a farmer's attention and starts our conversation with them.
- The passage of SB 430 will say to farmers and ranchers that what they are doing is important and that the state of Oregon, in this case the Oregon Legislature, recognizes the value of what they are doing to fight hunger and is offering some support. It will also send that same message to hungry people in Oregon.

I encourage your support for the passage of SB 430.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to share with you today about something for which we care deeply.