

TO: Senate Committee on Healthcare  
FROM: Leann Knapp, Oregon Food Bank  
RE: **Support SB 557 to increase healthcare access and decrease hunger**  
DATE: March 8, 2021



Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Knapp, and Members of the Committee,

Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 11 Oregonians were food insecure. **In 2020, 1 in 4 of our neighbors faced hunger<sup>1</sup>** – a dramatic increase driven by the public health and economic fallout of COVID-19. At Oregon Food Bank, we know that **hunger is a symptom of harmful policies and systems that create barriers for people to thrive**, and that we will only emerge stronger when we address hunger together, as a community. We also know that we can only end hunger for good by tackling its root causes, which is why we must act to address the inequality and oppression that create serious disparities in all areas of life, including healthcare.

Individuals who have inadequate access to healthcare are also more likely to experience hunger. While the expansion of Medicaid services to more Oregonians over the last decade has been life-changing for so many, we know that for too many people, healthcare coverage and dental coverage still remain out of reach. **The COFA Alliance National Network (CANN) has remained committed and resolute in their efforts to ensure that COFA Oregonians have access to the care they need.** Thanks to their incredible efforts, and support from the Legislature, Oregon eventually granted access to the Oregon Health Plan to the COFA community in 2015.

**Senate Bill 706 is the next step in the critical work to get everyone in Oregon insured** because changes to coverage are only effective if the communities who should benefit from them actually know that they exist. This bill would provide critical grant funding to conduct outreach to COFA communities in Oregon to actually help enroll individuals for healthcare coverage.

**Oregon Food Bank urges your support for Senate Bill 706-** because investing in outreach for COFA communities will help us close the gap of uninsured Oregonians and it will help us fight hunger.

Thank you for your consideration and your willingness to join Oregon Food Bank in building communities that never go hungry.

<sup>1</sup> <https://today.oregonstate.edu/news/new-osu-report-shows-about-25-oregonians-experienced-food-insecurity-2020>

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