

TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
FROM: Matt Newell-Ching, Public Policy Manager  
RE: SB 5555 - Make bold investments to see us through and to Emerge Stronger  
DATE: April 24, 2021



Chairs Johnson, Steiner-Hayward, Rayfield, and members of the committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today through our network of 21 regional food banks and 1,400 partner agencies; and we build community power to dismantle systems and policies that drive hunger and poverty.

Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 11 Oregonians were food insecure. **In 2020, 1 in 4 people in our communities faced hunger** – a dramatic increase. And the public health and economic impacts of the pandemic have fallen hardest on people who have faced systemic inequities for generations: communities of color, immigrants and refugees, single parents and caregivers, and our trans and gender non-conforming neighbors.

Budgets are moral documents. **Oregon Food Bank supports *The People's Budget*** (Fair Shot Coalition) because it is essential that we both make bold 1-time investments to support Oregonians through the end of the pandemic, and pass long-term policies and investments that address inequities, advance racial justice, and help *all* of our communities thrive.

### Recommended One-Time Investments

We need to make bold investments now that prioritize equity, racial justice and connections to nutritious food as federal pandemic relief winds down. Federal pandemic assistance to states should be spent swiftly and equitably to see Oregon through the pandemic and accelerate our economic recovery. Investments should include:

- A significant investment in the **Oregon Worker Relief Fund** to support Oregonians - including essential workers - excluded from federal aid, including UI and SNAP. (\$600m)
- **Connecting Oregonians to nutritious food** as federal pandemic relief phases out.
  - **Outreach** to ensure Oregonians sign up for food benefits for which they are eligible (\$500k)
  - **One transition month of Emergency SNAP benefits** to ensure Oregonians participating in SNAP can have adequate time to adjust family budgets. (\$61.6m)
  - **Support for emergency food purchases** due to disruptions to the emergency food supply (\$14m)
- **Support for equipment and infrastructure for BIPOC farmers** and BIPOC owned food enterprises to create resiliency for BIPOC people within Oregon's food system. (\$10m)

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## Recommended Long-Term Measures to Emerge Stronger:

We know how much the pandemic has tested our public structures – exposing serious inequities in the process. We need the legislature to support measures that help address these inequities and the broader drivers of hunger and poverty – from the high costs of healthcare and childcare to instability in housing and food access. And we can't afford to slow down on efforts to reimagine public safety, strengthen the rights of Oregonians who are immigrants, and keep *everyone* in our communities safe and healthy.

- **Make our state an inclusive place for Oregonians who are immigrants**
  - HB 2819 - Leave No Worker Behind. Ends the exclusion of the Earned Income Tax Credit for Oregonians who file taxes with an ITIN number, including many essential workers.
  - HB 3265 - Makes our communities safer by fulfilling Oregon's Sanctuary Promise.
  - HB 3230 - Keeps families together by ensuring universal legal representation for Oregonians facing immigration proceedings.
  
- **Advance equity for Oregonians who are members of COFA communities:**
  - SB 553 - Ensure COFA high school graduates per year are able to enroll in an Oregon college or university and pay in-state tuition costs.
  - SB 557 - Provide Medicaid-level dental care for those who do not qualify for Medicaid but do qualify for the COFA Premium Assistance Program for their medical insurance.
  - SB 706 - Provide critical grant funding to conduct outreach to COFA communities in Oregon to help enroll individuals for healthcare coverage.
  
- **Reduce hunger in our communities:**
  - SB 555 - Increase access to nutritious foods by expanding Oregon's "Double-Up Food Bucks" Program.
  - HB 2833 - Build more equitable solutions to hunger by making the Oregon Hunger Task Force more inclusive.
  - HB 2835 - Reduce hunger on college campuses by establishing a Basic Needs Navigator program at community colleges and public universities.
  - Support access to emergency food by investing \$4.56 in the Oregon Hunger Response Fund.
  
- **Keep Oregonians in their homes**, whether they're rented or owned. In the midst of a pandemic, we must ensure that everyone has access to safe and affordable housing options:
  - HB 2096A - Increase housing options for agricultural workers by increasing the the Agricultural Workforce Tax Credit tax credit.
  - HB 2842 - Creates a Healthy Homes program to provide financial assistance to persons in low income households to repair and rehabilitate homes.



- **Re-Imagine Public Safety:**
  - SB 755 - Expand access to addiction recovery services and make necessary clarifications to the Drug Addiction Treatment & Recovery Act.
  - HB 2002 - Make bold steps toward re-imagining public safety including investments in restorative justice and culturally-specific services.
  
- **Re-build Oregon's Child Care Sector** by making the Employment-Related Day Care program more affordable for families and better coordinating Oregon's early learning programs (HB 3073).

Oregon Food Bank believes it's not enough simply to return to normal. Normal wasn't working for too many people. We have the opportunity to rebuild and emerge stronger so that we can end hunger for good in our communities. This is our moment to embrace our shared values, care for each other and take bold action in support of *all* Oregonians.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

