

TO: House Special Committee on December 21, 2020
FROM: Susannah Morgan, CEO, Oregon Food Bank
RE: Support for Accountability via HR 3
DATE: June 10, 2021



Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

I write today with a heavy heart. In nearly three decades in the anti-hunger movement, I never expected that our work to end hunger and its root causes would be jeopardized by threats of violence and outright assault — let alone that elected officials would willingly participate in these actions. Yet here we are.

Achieving Oregon Food Bank's vision of resilient communities that never go hungry requires a foundation of an inclusive, healthy democracy in which every person can safely participate. We have now been presented with irrefutable video evidence that Representative Mike Nearman not only facilitated violence at the Oregon State Capitol, but was integral in planning the breach on December 21, 2020. These are violations of public safety and trust that cannot go unanswered.

Accountability is not a partisan issue. Oregon Food Bank joins nearly every Oregon State Representative — Republicans and Democrats alike — in calling on Rep. Nearman to resign immediately. Should he refuse, **we support HR 3 to take the appropriate step to expel Rep. Nearman from the Oregon House of Representatives.**

The State Capitol is a critical place that we go to advocate for the policy changes we need to fight hunger. Yet spaces in and around the building have become increasingly unsafe for community members to engage in the democratic process. Those who have fostered and contributed to this unsafe environment must be held accountable.

It is no secret that the triple threat of the pandemic, wildfires and economic recession have had devastating consequences in every corner of our state. **Policymakers and advocates should be focused on addressing the essential needs of Oregonians in this moment — food security, housing, healthcare and more — not worried for their safety and well-being when we go to work.** I hope that you will act swiftly to remove Rep. Mike Nearman and restore the safe, inclusive environment that is so critical to our shared vision for resilient communities that never know hunger.

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