

Testimony

Oregon State Senate Committee On Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery

SB 440 and SB 555 – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance & Program (SNAP)

February 2, 2021

Participant for the record:

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Chair Gelsler, Vice Chair Anderson, Senator Lieber, Senator Robinson, and Senator Taylor, my name is Martha Brooks. I am the State Director of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and ReadyNation, a bipartisan, non-profit organization of senior law enforcement and business leaders with over 200 members in Oregon. Our law enforcement and business leaders have long understood that to get children started on the right path in life, help them get ready for and graduate from school, and become a productive part of our workforce, investments need to be made all the way along the continuum of their lives. That includes making sure that ALL of our Oregon children have access to quality, nutritious food.

The need is great. In Oregon, 28 percent of families receiving SNAP benefits have children and that number and need continues to grow in 2020 with the COVID-19 outbreak and increase in unemployment. Due to COVID-19, food insecurity in Oregon has nearly doubled.

By expanding Oregon's SNAP program through either SB 440 or SB 555, these investments will support local food production and positively contribute to the local and regional economy of farmers, farm share programs and independently locally-owned grocery stores.

The investment will benefit our children as well. What we know is that participation in SNAP has been shown to reduce the prevalence of health issues for children and adolescents if they have access to good, quality, nutritious food. The program aims to support the increased purchase of fruits and vegetables among SNAP participants, by increasing access and affordability for more children from low-income families. Nutritious foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, tend to cost more. Less nutrient dense food tends to be cheaper, posing a barrier to healthy eating and contributing to health concerns such as heart disease and diabetes. SNAP Nutrition Incentives such as those supported in SB 440 and SB 555 will reduce barriers to nutritious foods for many Oregon families.

Ensuring all children have consistent access to fresh and nutritious food at all stages of development—prenatally and birth through school age is critical to having healthy adults who can contribute to the workforce and avoid crime. Increased investments at both state and federal levels, innovations at the community level, and diversification of access points will support the health and well being of our children.

Today, a staggering number of children do not have access to nutritious foods. We firmly believe that nutritious food should not be for some and not all. Access to nutritious food is critical to ensuring that our kids grow up healthy and prepared to succeed in life. **Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and ReadyNation ask for your support and passage of SB 440 and/or SB 555.**