

Submitter: Mary Zodrow
On Behalf Of: Gladstone School Food Pantry and NWFS FoodMatters
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

The following story is intended to influence and exhibit support for the successful passage of SB5506 to ensure continued access to much needed on-going and emergency free and healthy food sources. As uncertainties in the world continue to increase, one thing that remains a constant beam of light and hope in our community is the Gladstone School Food Pantry and the Northwest Family Services (NWFS) FoodMatters Supplemental Food Program, both partners of the Oregon Food Bank. In serving over 200 families per week, these two food programs must depend on the generous food donations from the Oregon Food Bank (OFB), Grocery Outlet, Bob's Red Mill, Dave's Killer Bread, Imperfect Produce and others. These free food distributions strive to be a steady glimmer of light for a diverse variety seniors, adults, families and children who need a helping hand to put food on the table on a weekly basis. Gladstone Pantry volunteers and NWFS staff greet each and every client with a bright smile and welcoming demeanor. In return, they hear stories of the daily struggles of our community members, which have been exacerbated by the combined COVID and economic crises, as well as expressions of hope and gratitude. In many cases, multiple families with school age children are living together to make ends meet due to the loss of jobs and income and the rising cost of groceries. Just last week, a woman was in tears explaining that she now has 7 extra mouths to feed and that the food boxes are sustaining the nutritional needs of her and her unanticipated guests. Another client explained that his manufacturing job is only part time right now, so he is not receiving a full paycheck. He is grateful for the weekly food boxes which lighten that financial burden and emotional stress for him and his family. Please support and pass SB5506 so that we can continue to address the most basic of human needs, an adequate source and supply of nutritional food on a regular basis. Thank you for passing SB5506 on behalf of all of the people served by Gladstone School Food Pantry and the Northwest Family Services (NWFS) FoodMatters Supplemental Food Program.