

TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
 FROM: Melissa Carlson-Swanson, Tillamook County Services Manager,  
 Oregon Food Bank  
 RE: Budget Priorities to Address Hunger and its Root Causes  
 DATE: April 14, 2023



Chairs Sanchez and Steiner, and members of the committee,

My name is Melissa “Mis” Carlson-Swanson. I manage the Tillamook County Branch of Oregon Food Bank. I have also served on local and regional boards relating to areas such as food security and housing. Food Security is essential for a vital community. Community Food Systems and Food Bank Organizations work together to ensure access to food for everyone in their community, sustainably, year round.

The current state of hunger in Tillamook County is impacted by high rates of housing insecurity due to our housing crisis, cost and lack of transportation, rising food costs, and the reduction of SNAP benefits, among other ongoing challenges. Although there are a number of collaborative community projects in progress to address some of these challenges, which will have great impact down the road, they do not have the ability to address the challenges that are being faced right now.

At Oregon Food Bank we believe food is a human right. Ending hunger requires a clear vision and bold action, with all of us working together to provide nutritious, culturally-relevant food today and to address the root causes of food insecurity in our communities, like unaffordable housing and child care, and systemic racism, sexism, and transphobia.

Oregon Food Bank urges Oregon’s legislature to take bold action so we can emerge stronger. We commend the legislature for already taking action this session to address homelessness and housing affordability. We would like to highlight several critical budget priorities that - together - will help Oregon on our pathway to ending hunger for good:

**Food For All Oregonians (SB 610)**

We believe everyone in Oregon should have access to food, no matter where we were born. SB 610 will make food assistance available to all Oregonians who are currently excluded from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food benefits due to immigration status or Compact of Free Association (COFA) status. Oregonians who are immigrants make our communities stronger. Community members who are excluded from SNAP are kids, parents, grandparents, college students, entrepreneurs, taxpayers and workers in areas including food production, health care and education. The Food For All Oregonians bill, SB 610, passed out of the Senate Human Services Committee on April 3 with bipartisan support.

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## Budget Requests to Strengthen the Emergency Food System

The Oregon Food Bank Network has three priorities for the 2023 budget to help meet the increased need, while strengthening our statewide network to ensure food remains available to all who need it, for years to come:

- **\$9M for the Oregon Hunger Response Fund** to maintain funding for emergency food distribution efforts of Oregon's 20 Regional Food Banks.
  - Tillamook County Food Bank Branch of Oregon Food Bank uses their portion of these funds to serve over 30 programs and partner agencies, distributing much needed food assistance for seniors, families, children, and underserved communities.
- **\$10M to fund critical food purchases** through the Oregon Department of Human Services. Funds and food will be distributed to community-based food assistance programs across rural and urban communities, addressing disruptions in food supplies.
  - With past food purchasing funds, we have been able to purchase locally grown/produced foods through Food Roots, and Valley Fresh Produce, who has provided fresh produce, as well as culturally relevant foods, at affordable prices in Tillamook for decades.
- **\$22M to strengthen Oregon's food distribution network** to make one-time investments in regional food banks, ensuring greater capacity to accept, store and transport locally-sourced fruits and vegetables, dairy, protein and pantry staples.
  - Tillamook County's portion of these funds will be used to support two cold storage facilities at the Port of Tillamook and Garibaldi, as well as refrigerated vehicles for our branch to support the delivery of produce and other fresh foods.

## Double Up Food Bucks (HB 2728)

Double Up Food Bucks Oregon matches SNAP benefits so Oregonians can purchase additional fruits & vegetables. For every dollar spent on SNAP-eligible foods at participating farmers markets, CSA shares, and select independently owned grocery stores, SNAP participants receive an additional dollar to spend on fruits and vegetables, up to \$20 per visit. In Tillamook, shoppers are able to use these funds to purchase locally grown and produced foods year round, increasing their access to a variety of fresh foods, at Food Roots FarmTable StoreFront, at the Farmers market in the summer, with potential for additional sites, increasing access, if this expansion passes. Double Up generates \$1.80 in further economic activity for every SNAP dollar spent, and this impact is even greater, up to \$3, for purchases on local farm direct produce. HB 2728 passed out of the House Early Childhood and Human Services Committee unanimously on March 8.



### **Moving Toward Healthy School Meals for All** (Budget Revision in HB 5014)

On March 22, 2023, USDA (which oversees school meals federally), announced a game-changing proposal to reduce child hunger in schools and ensure access to school meals for all, which reduces stigma and boosts student achievement. Hundreds more schools in Oregon will be eligible to serve breakfast and lunch at no charge. A funding revision in HB 5014 will be necessary to ensure the Hunger-Free Schools Account is sufficient to ensure this new option is financially viable as soon as it's available so we can do right by Oregon's kids.

### **Oregon Kids' Credit** (HB 3235)

Evidence shows this is a proven way to reduce hunger and poverty. In 2021, the federal monthly Child Tax Credit reduced Food Insecurity by 26%. Sadly, that policy expired at the end of 2021. The Oregon Kids' Credit advances racial justice and supports single parents who perform a disproportionate share of uncompensated care work. Children in rural Oregon stand to especially benefit. HB 3535 passed out of the House Early Childhood and Human Services Committee unanimously on March 29.

### **Child Care for Oregon** (HB 2991, HB 3005, HB 2727, 3027)

We are all better off when kids have a safe place to be while parents are at work. It is critical that we rebuild our child care sector. Together, these proposals will improve access to affordable and inclusive child care. Child care is the work that makes all other work possible.

Sincerely,

Melissa Carlson-Swanson  
Tillamook County Services Manager  
Oregon Food Bank

