



TO: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
FROM: Sarah McGregor, Manager, Feeding Umpqua  
Chair, Oregon Food Bank Network  
RE: State Budget  
DATE: April 14, 2023

Co-Chair Steiner, Co-Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sarah McGregor and I am the Manager of Feeding Umpqua, the regional food bank serving all of Douglas County. Feeding Umpqua, a program run and operated by United Community Action Network, works with over 28 organizations serving over 40 locations to provide supplemental and emergency nutrition to nearly 18,000 people every month. Here at Feeding Umpqua, we believe food is a human right. And we know that 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. We've seen an unprecedented need for emergency food assistance in recent years. **Today, there is no doubt that the rising cost of food and housing is again worsening food insecurity here in Oregon and in Douglas County. Last month, our numbers soared with over 25,000 people accessing emergency food. The number represents a 68% increase year-to-year.** The safety net our Network provides is critical to keeping folks fed, healthy, and provides an important off-set to already stretched household budgets. No one should have to choose between paying rent and keeping their families fed.

As a member and Chair of the Oregon Food Bank Network, I wanted to share with you our Network's three priorities for the 2023 budget. We believe that these priorities will 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 statewide.**

The Oregon Hunger Response Fund provides ongoing support for our regional food bank to support staffing and transportation. It is the primary vehicle for state support of Oregon's emergency food assistance network - helping to ensure nutritious, culturally-relevant food reaches hard-hit communities throughout the state. The reliance on these funds of our Network of Regional Food Banks, especially rural food banks like ours who don't have large private funding operations, can't be overstated. These funds helps rural Food Banks like ours keep their doors open, trucks on the road, and pantries fully stocked. The high cost of living has impacted our ability to keep everyone in need fed, and these funds, especially during the pandemic, helped keep our doors open.

**\$10M to fund critical food purchases through the Oregon Department of Human Services.**

Widespread supply chain impacts, labor constraints, and economic and market shifts caused by the pandemic continue to disrupt the food industry. We anticipate disruption to donated food streams will continue for the foreseeable future, meaning far fewer industrial donations and less predictability. Prior to the pandemic, we received over 2.2 million pounds of food annually, with roughly 38% of that coming from donation. Last fiscal year, we brought in 1.5 million pounds, with approximately 32% coming from donation. Because of this decline in food in general, we have started purchasing food. Prior to the pandemic, we



purchased less than 1% of the food we distribute and last year, that total was up to 6%. While that is still a small amount of our food supply, it represents a large change in strategy. One that would not have been possible without the investment made by Oregon.

**\$22M to strengthen Oregon’s food distribution network to make one-time infrastructure investments in regional food banks to support Oregonians facing hunger.**

The Oregon Food Bank Network includes 20 regional food banks across the state, fueling more than 1,200 free food markets, pantries, and meal sites. We are incredibly proud of the expansive, community-led effort that reaches Oregonians in rural, urban and suburban communities, distributing more than 44.4 million meals (53.3 million pounds) worth of food from the coast to the high desert. Ongoing pandemic and inflation impacts have strained this statewide infrastructure, much of which is 20-30 years old. Many facilities are in need of significant repairs and updates to maintain distribution of nutritious, culturally-relevant foods. A one-time \$22 million investment in food distribution infrastructure will ensure greater capacity to accept, store and transport locally-sourced fruits and vegetables, dairy, protein and pantry staples.

Here at Feeding Umpqua, we have many problems in our facility – we have a cracked floor, leaking roof, and an old refrigerated box truck that needs repairs all of the time. Being able to address these structural problems will go a long way to helping us better support our Network of partner agencies across the County.

I am mindful as we make these requests that food banking alone is not a permanent solution to hunger. Hunger is not just an empty stomach or an individual experience. We are encouraged that the legislature is also taking action to address the reasons why so many people seek emergency food, including access to housing, child care, and addressing systemic barriers that cause disparities in who among us struggles to afford food. Ending hunger in Oregon requires an all-of-the-above strategy.

We urge you to support these important requests.

Sincerely,

Sarah McGregor  
Feeding Umpqua Program Manager  
United Community Action Network