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TO: Joint Subcommittee On Capital Construction
FROM: Tom Mulhern, Executive Director
RE: HB 5030
DATE: May 5, 2023

Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Tom Mulhern and I am the Executive Director of FOOD For Lane County. We operate the second-largest regional food bank in Oregon. Working with more than 150 local partner organizations in all sections of Lane County, we serve more than 70,000 food insecure individuals each year.

The demand for food assistance has grown in recent months, and our food pantries are seeing more people seeking food boxes now than they did in the first year of the pandemic. This increase in demand has been fueled by the increased cost of food and other necessities, combined with the recent loss of pandemic-related benefits particularly the loss of emergency allotments in SNAP benefits.

Our regional food bank network is requesting \$22M for one-time infrastructure investments into our regional food banks across the state. This request will help strengthen our statewide distribution network and support Oregonians facing hunger.

FOOD For Lane County would use its portion of these funds to help purchase land for growing food. We have two food-producing projects, the 2.5 acre GrassRoots Garden in Eugene and the 6-acre Youth Farm in Springfield. These gardens include a compost demonstration site, full outdoor kitchen, and grow more than 100,000 pounds of organic produce that is distributed throughout the network of partner agencies. Thousands of youth and adult volunteers help maintain the gardens. Teens work at the farm, learning valuable job skills, like gardening, leadership and financial management. Both locations are owned by others and both are at risk of sale for development. We want to purchase our own land so that we can ensure continued food production to supplement and support our food bank operations.

We are mindful as we make this request 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 steps to address the reasons why so many people seek emergency food,

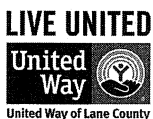
Thank you for your thoughtful consideration. I hope you will support this important request.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Mulhern".

Tom Mulhern
Executive Director



FFLC is an equal opportunity provider and a member of



and the Oregon Food Bank Network