

FROM: Sammi Teo, Public Policy Advocate, Oregon Food Bank  
RE: Support for SB 528 and SB 530 – Regional Health Equity Coalitions  
DATE: February 27, 2025



Chair Patterson and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

Oregon Food Bank’s mission is “to eliminate hunger and its root causes... *because no one should be hungry.*” We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today, and we advocate to change policies that drive hunger and poverty. Last year alone, through our network of over 1,200+ community-based food pantries, meal sites, and programs, we distributed over 91 million meals (nearly 110 million pounds of food). This massive scale food distribution effort served 2.5 million visits at our food assistance sites, marking a 31% increase compared to the prior year.

Oregon Food Bank supports SB 528 and SB 530, which will ensure the continued success of Regional Health Equity Coalitions (RHECs). **RHECs reduce health inequities by identifying and acting on critical issues impacting priority populations in underserved, rural regions of Oregon.** By assessing barriers through grassroots community engagement, RHECs uplift the voices of their communities to create effective solutions through policy and systems change.

**RHECs also have a proven history of partnership**, such as when RHECs distributed \$1.4 million to Oregonians during COVID-19 and wildfires, consulted with local schools to ensure equitable education, and partnered with OHA to help meet the agency’s goal to eliminate health inequities.

We support SB 528 because it would help ensure priority populations all over the state get their needs met. Specifically, **SB 528 would cover rural communities in six more counties that are not currently served by a RHEC**, provide two full time employees to support the RHECs existing workload, and provide funding to fully support programmatic costs such as childcare, food, transportation, and interpretation and translation to reach under-served communities.

We support SB 530 because in order for RHECs to continue to engage those most underserved across the state, it needs to be able to keep up with the cost of operating in Oregon. SB 530 would simply ensure that RHEC funding is adjusted for inflation, thereby creating sustainability for RHECs across the state.

Regional Health Equity Coalitions are vital to our community, and these policies will allow for an immediate increase in their capacity to create a healthier more resilient Oregon for all. Please vote yes on SB 528 and SB 530. Thank you.

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