



To: Chair Hartman, Vice-Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services
From: Human Services Coalition of Oregon
Re: House Bill 3497 – Developing an Oregon Multi-Sector Plan for Aging
Date: March 6, 2025

Dear Chair Hartman, Vice-Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services,

On behalf of the Human Services Coalition of Oregon (HSCO), we ask for your support of House Bill (HB) 3497, which creates a task force to develop an Oregon multi-sector plan for aging. HSCO is a coalition of member organizations that all share the vision that our state is strongest when the basic needs of all Oregonians are met. HSCO supports HB 3497 because it creates a proactive forum for diverse partners and agencies to collaboratively address the needs of our state’s growing population of older Oregonians.

The Legislative Policy and Research Office (LPRO) provides a helpful Older Oregonians dashboard with information about our state’s aging population.¹ The dashboard notes that, during the years spanning 2022 to 2050, “*every county* in Oregon is projected to experience an increase in the older adult population,” confirming that the need to thoughtfully address this population shift is shared statewide.²

As a human services coalition, it is important for us to highlight how the growth of our aging population in Oregon is likely to require human services responsiveness. LPRO’s Older Oregonians dashboard shows that about one in six older Oregonians (17.2 percent) had incomes near or below the federal poverty line in 2021 (\$12,996, annually, for a single person, or \$16,400, annually, for a two-person household).³ As of 2022, counties with the largest total population of older Oregonians were Curry, Gilliam, Grant, Lincoln, Wallowa, and Wheeler counties (all of which are rural, four of which qualify as frontier counties).⁴ The most common source of income for older Oregonians is Social Security – a fixed income source – with 89.8 percent of households for folks 65 years or older receiving it as at least some, or for others, all, of their income, as of 2021.

¹ Legislative Policy and Research Office, “Older Oregonians” data dashboard (October 27, 2023), <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/508023e1a676447e8e1ca6ee6ec41e83>.

² *Id.* at Projected Changes tab (emphasis added).

³ *Id.* at Current Characteristics tab.

⁴ *Id.* at Introduction tab. See also Oregon Health Sciences University – Oregon Office of Rural Health, <https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-office-of-rural-health/about-rural-and-frontier-data> (listing Oregon’s frontier counties).



As the number of older Oregonians grows, a significant number of whom are on low, fixed incomes and/or are residents of rural or frontier areas, our state must be prepared to respond to community needs, with particular attention paid to issues such as housing costs and availability, health care access and workforce (particularly in rural and frontier areas of our state), transportation accessibility, rising food insecurity amongst seniors,⁵ and cost-of-living increases for folks on fixed incomes, among others.

The good news is that there is already work underway to understand and address many of these issues. The task force proposed by HB 3497 – which includes robust community engagement and agency collaboration – will serve as an important hub for connecting the dots to what work is ongoing and what work needs to begin for Oregon to best understand and comprehensively plan for our state’s growth in our older Oregonians population.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 3497; we urge your support.

Contact HSCO: oregonhsco@gmail.com

⁵ McElhane, J., & Edwards, M. (2024). *Pandemic Increases in Oregon’s Food Insecurity (2021-2023)*, Oregon Policy Analysis Lab, Oregon State University, page 3, https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/2024-11/Oregon_Food_Insecurity_Rates_2021-2023_november_2024.pdf (food insecurity amongst Oregonians ages 65 and older rose from 4.7 percent during 2018-2020 to 8.7 percent during 2021-2023).