

Submitter: David Warmbier  
On Behalf Of: Peace Health Medical Group Produce Plus  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5526

Support for Critical Food Assistance

Date: 3/11/2025

Name: David Warmbier

Organization: Peace Health Medical Group, Senior Health & Wellness

Location: Eugene Oregon

Co-Chair Campos, Co-Chair Valderamma, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Produce Plus Program we run weekly here at Peace Health Barger, we strongly support increased funding through the Oregon Hunger Response Fund to provide critical food assistance throughout the state. In local communities, we provide food security that serves as a lifeline to thousands of families and individuals facing food insecurity. As we have seen over the past few years, the need for food assistance has only increased, along with the cost of purchasing food.

One-third more Oregonians are experiencing hunger now than before the pandemic. Last year, there were 2.5 million visits to the 1,200 food assistance sites through the Oregon Food Network — a 31% increase from the previous year. We are in the midst of an ongoing hunger crisis, and we have the opportunity to make meaningful change in this legislative session. In a survey among Oregon's regional food programs, a gap of \$15 million was identified to maintain existing services. In looking at it from a statewide perspective, the need intensifies.

In our community, we were serving 70 people weekly pre-pandemic. In the past month, we provided fresh fruits and veggies to 110 people a week, most of them seniors. To sustain food assistance operations and partnerships with local pantries, meal sites and shelters, in our community we need much more funding.

With many of our neighbors one paycheck away from crisis, and food banks are often the only place they can turn to for help. Food insecurity impacts Oregonians of all ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds, and it is a direct barrier to health, education, and productivity. The funding requested today will directly support food distribution, operational costs, and programs that target specific needs within our communities.

I urge you to recognize the vital work that food banks do and the critical role they play in sustaining the health and well-being of our communities. Increased funding is not just a response to a crisis; it is an investment in Oregon's future—a future where no one goes hungry. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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