

## Support for Critical Food Assistance

**Date:** 3/11/2025

**Name:** Stefani Souza

**Organization (if applicable):** Sacred Connections Community Church

**Location:** Eugene, Oregon

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

On behalf of Sacred Connections Community Church, 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, last month we fed over 1000 people and our new clients continue to grow week after week. To sustain and expand our food service we are in need of expanded and improved infrastructure to be able to adequately store and distribute the growing amount of food needed to support those who visit our food pantry. Additionally, to sustain food assistance operations and partnerships with local pantries, meal sites and shelters, in our community we are in full support of the \$2 million that Food For Lane County is requesting to sustain all the food pantries that they support and we are a part of.

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,  
Stefani Souza & Lindsay Bowen  
831-402-5866  
Sacred Connections Community Church  
sacredconnections810@gmail.com