

**Date:** March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Name:** Karla Snell

**Organization:** Head Start of Lane County

**Location:** Springfield Oregon

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

On behalf of Head Start of Lane County, 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 zero Families/people monthly pre-pandemic. Last month, we fed over 400 children. To sustain food assistance operations and partnerships with local pantries, meal sites and shelters, in our community we need Food For Lane County to be funded to the extent of the need in Lane County.

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,

Karla Snell  
Family & Community Engagement Consultant

Head Start of Lane County

Ksnell@hsolc.org