



RE: Support for Critical Food Assistance

March 12, 2025

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

I am writing on behalf of Community Food for Creswell, to urge you to increase funding through the Oregon Response Fund, to provide much needed food to low-income families throughout our state. Prior to the Covid pandemic, our food pantry provided an average of sixty 3-5 day food boxes each week, we currently assist an average of ninety households per week. We distributed 10,000 meals from our commercial kitchen last year and our 3-5 day food boxes fed over 13,000 individuals (duplicated). We are serving the elderly, homeless, young families, single adults and those fighting serious illness. Shared by one of our customers tonight; *"I am an 84 year old female on a fixed income. I worked till I was 82. With the cost of rent, electric, phone and cable going up all the time there is not much left for food and other things like gas for the car, household products, etc. It is stressful. I feel so grateful to have the food pantry here. They are amazing, they even deliver to my door twice a month."*

Oregon Food Bank tells us that 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. 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 careful consideration.

With Warm Regards,

Susan Blachnik

