



Date: March 13, 2025

Name: Lori Garrard

Organization: Klamath-Lake Counties Food Bank

Location: Klamath Falls, Oregon

RE: **Support for Critical Food Assistance**

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

On behalf of the Klamath-Lake Counties Food Bank, we ask that you support increased funding for regional food programs 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. Recent federal reductions to food programs intensify the need we are seeing locally.

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 approximately 4,000 people monthly pre-pandemic. Last month, we fed approximately 4,500. To sustain food assistance operations and partnerships with local pantries, meal sites and shelters, in our community we need \$600,000.

With many of our neighbors one paycheck away from crisis, 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,
Lori Garrard
Executive Director
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