

TO: Joint Subcommittee on Human Services
FROM: Matt Newell-Ching, Senior Policy Manager
RE: SB 5526 - Self-Sufficiency Programs in the Human Services Budget
DATE: March 13, 2025



Co-Chair Campos, Co-Chair Valderrama, and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes... *because no one should go hungry*. Hunger is at crisis levels in Oregon. Last year alone, we saw 2.5 million visits to 1,200 food assistance sites through our Network – a staggering 31% increase from the previous year. One in eight people and one in six children in our state live in households that struggle to afford food. The rising cost of food and housing is forcing families to make impossible choices between keeping a roof over their heads and putting food on the table.

Our job is now made even more challenging because of choices happening at the federal level. Since January, changes at the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) at USDA alone have resulted in:

- **The cancellation of 30 truckloads of food intended to be distributed to Oregonians struggling to afford food, scheduled to arrive in Oregon starting in April.** In the second half of 2024, this stream of food accounted for 18% of the food distributed to our network. We have no reason to believe it will be resumed.
- **The termination of the Local Food for Schools and Child Care program (LFSCC),** ending federal-state partnerships that have been instrumental in ending childhood poverty across the country. Oregon received \$2 million in Local Food for Schools funding that was utilized by Oregon's food producers and schools to provide local healthy food to children across the state and to address high food costs.
- **The ending of the Local Food Purchasing Agreement,** effective October 1st, 2025. This has been essential in providing fresh, locally grown food to communities impacted by hunger, ensuring families have access to nourishing, culturally relevant food. It also supports local socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, and fishers - as defined by the USDA and federal law. In Oregon, this has funded over \$6 million in food purchasing dollars to 268 producers across 19 counties throughout the state to provide fresh, local foods to underserved communities. Without this funding, local producers and food hubs will be left with gaps in critical funding for their businesses and to serve these communities.

We struggle to understand why it is in a time when food costs are high and hunger is on the rise - both in Oregon and nationwide - that federal officials have chosen to curtail support to people and families struggling to afford food. Yet here we are.

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Oregon Needs Bold Leadership to Meet the Moment

Budgets are moral documents. There is no more important expression of the values of our state than our state budgets. At a time when hunger is on the rise in Oregon and we face an uncertain future at the federal level, **we are looking to the legislature to show strong and steady leadership in this time of crisis**, especially regarding the Human Services Budget (SB 5526). That steadiness means supporting essential services, continuing to make strategic investments, and choosing not to preemptively disinvest in our state because of proposals to cut federal programs (like SNAP and Medicaid) that have not yet happened and have had a history of failing in Congress in the past. This is how Oregon should stand up for its values in this moment: by standing strong for everyone in our communities.

Oregon Food Bank knows that food banking alone will never end hunger. That's why we support strong investments in Human Services programs at this critical time. We would like to highlight a few of our priorities:

Oregon Food Bank's Top Priority in 2025: Food for All Oregonians (SB 611)

Oregon Food Bank's top priority in the 2025 Session is ensuring that all Oregonians have access to food, and that immigrants in Oregon - who contribute over \$5 billion in taxes in Oregon every year¹ - are not excluded from being able to feed themselves or their family. Food For All Oregonians (SB 611) builds on the success of the SNAP program and would use state funding to extend the benefits of SNAP to kids and elders who would be eligible for SNAP but for immigration status. Five other states, including Washington and California, have such state investments. Food for All Oregonians is endorsed by over 180 organizations and businesses statewide.

The Oregon Hunger Response Fund

The Oregon Hunger Response Fund (OHRF) - currently proposed at \$6.4m within SB 5526 - is a lifeline for our communities. It supports the 20 Regional Food Hubs supplying 1,200+ food distribution partners and programs in Oregon procure and distribute fresh, locally sourced produce, dairy, protein, and pantry staples – ensuring that nutritious and culturally relevant food reaches families in need. For decades, this investment has allowed our Network to sustain essential infrastructure, transportation, staffing, and volunteer coordination so that food banks across the state can meet the growing demand. We know that food banks can stretch a dollar much further than individual consumers – leveraging partnerships with farmers, ranchers, and grocers to maximize every state dollar. For every \$10 invested, our Network can provide up to 30 meals, keeping food local and supporting Oregon's economy in the process.

We strongly support the recommended \$6.4 million for OHRF in SB 5622, and we encourage you to consider additional investment in the Oregon Hunger Response Fund to help ensure

¹ <https://data.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/map-the-impact/>



strong community-level responses to hunger. We know that the need for food assistance continues to grow, and federal USDA disruptions have already occurred.

Double Up Food Bucks

For over a decade, Double Up Food Bucks (“Double Up”) has connected SNAP participants with Oregon grown produce at Farmers Markets, CSAs, and an increasing number of grocery stores, facilitating almost \$19 million in SNAP and Double Up sales since 2016. A recent economic impact assessment showed the power of Double Up to strengthen localized economies. Providing incentives helped families on tight budgets to free up funds for spending on other vital purchases like food, housing, and health care. In 2024 over \$6 million in Oregon labor income was created due to the additional spending that Double Up made possible.

Continued investment of \$4.34 million in Double Up in the Human Services Budget is essential to leveraging federal matching dollars and growing the program's impact. We urge you to fully fund the Double Up Food Bucks program within SB 5526.

