



March 13, 2025

To: Co-Chairs Campos and Valderrama, and members of the Joint Subcommittee On Human Services
From: Sarah Weber-Ogden, Partners For a Hunger-Free Oregon
RE: Support for SB 5526

Co-Chairs Campos and Valderrama, and members of the committee,

My name is Sarah Weber-Ogden, and I serve as Executive Director of Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon where we believe, as stated in Oregon statute, that all people have the right to be free from hunger. Since 2005 our organization has worked in lock step with the Oregon Hunger Task Force. Formed by the legislature in 1989, the Oregon Hunger Task Force has worked as a statewide advocate for Oregonians who are hungry or at risk of hunger. The Task Force works collaboratively with stakeholders throughout Oregon to promote community awareness, compile research, and develop proposals for government action to address hunger in the state.

I am here today to urge you to fully fund the Self-Sufficiency Programs (SSP) in SB 5526. Right now, Oregon's families are facing looming threats—federal cuts to critical anti-hunger programs could leave thousands without the support they need to put food on the table. Oregon must stand up and stand strong for our communities. The choices you make today will determine whether families get the help they need—or are left to struggle alone.

Oregon has faced a moment like this before. In 1989, our state was in the grip of a historic hunger crisis—one of the worst in the nation. Families were skipping meals, food banks were overwhelmed, and the need was staggering. But instead of looking away, Oregon's leaders made a bold choice. They declared, in law, that every Oregonian has the right to be *free from hunger* and created the Oregon Hunger Task Force to drive real solutions. That decision wasn't easy, but it was right—and it set Oregon apart as a leader in the fight against hunger.

Now, we face another defining moment. Today, 1 in 8 Oregonians experience food insecurity. Federal emergency benefits enacted to meet the needs of struggling communities during the pandemic were clearly very successful, keeping food insecurity rates relatively stable. However now that those programs which were so supportive of families have ended, hunger has surged back. Single parents, rural communities, people of color, older adults, and the unemployed are being hit hardest.

We know what works—and the efficacy of programs like SNAP is increased by Double Up Food Bucks, and the Elderly Simplified Application Process which help families access benefits and weather hard times. But without full funding, they cannot do their job.

This is your moment to lead. Just like in 1989, Oregon needs bold action. Fully fund SSP in SB 5526 and ensure that every Oregonian has the support they need to live free from hunger. The leaders before you met their moment—now, I believe that you will meet yours.