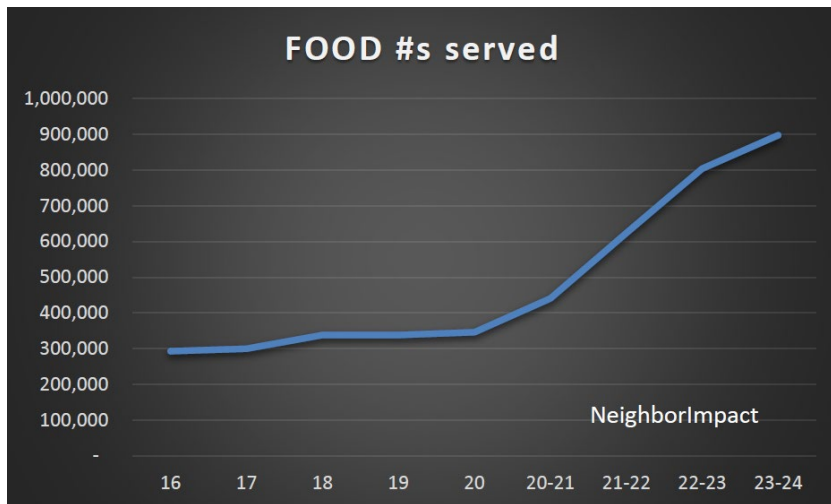




March 27, 2025

Dear members of the Central Oregon legislative delegation:

Take a look at this graph:



This is the stark reality facing and challenging the regional food bank serving Central Oregon. Since 2020, the number of people being fed by NeighborImpact and its 59 local food distribution partners has surged from 346,058 people to 897,966 people. That is an average of 28,838 monthly versus 74,830-- **a 159 percent increase in demand in just four years!** And the number continues to climb. (Note: (People get counted every time they come to a food distribution site, and some visit multiple times per month.)

With support from the State of Oregon, NeighborImpact has been able to meet this demand, acquiring more food and adding more distribution channels, but as we look forward, something is going to have to change.

On or about February 7, the incoming federal Administration gave notice of its intent to put an important program, the Federal Commodity Credit Corporation on hold. On March 6, the

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Administration cancelled all outstanding orders at least through July. The effect of this decision is to shut down the distribution of important dietary components, including meat, dairy and eggs and other products that households depend on to supplement food obtained through federal SNAP (formerly food stamps) benefits. Those benefits themselves are likely to decline by up to 30 percent when the next Farm Bill is adopted, and they are already diminished in value because of the rising cost of food. (Food prices have increased 23.6 percent from 2020 to 2024.)

We do not expect the Commodity Credit Corporation to reopen after July. Grimly, we informed our 59 partners in the region—the Giving Plate, the St. Vincent de Pauls, the senior centers, the homeless shelters—to **expect up to 17 percent less food** starting Monday, March 31. O

Meanwhile, facing unprecedented demand, the operating cost of our program has come with added cost. The small, 8-person staff, the gas and maintenance for trucks that move food through a geography the size of New Jersey, soaring utility costs that keep freezers and coolers running and now the cost of purchasing food, even at a deep discount, to replace lost federal commodities, adds up. Our budget has risen 82 percent since 2020. A contribution by the State in 2002 helped fill the gap, but that funding expires at the end of June. Without relief, there will be decreased food supply in Central Oregon in the near term and there will be more hunger and corresponding outrage in the region come summer.

I want to posit to you that something has fundamentally changed in the landscape of how we take care of people. Formerly, food banking was about taking extra food from growers and grocers and redistributing it to avoid wasting it in landfills. Small numbers of people were impacted. But that has been shifting along with the rise in the cost of housing, utilities, food, and other goods. With over 25 percent of renters paying more than 50 percent of income in rent and 50 percent of renters cost-burdened with rent that costs more than 30 percent of income, we are seeing more and more working-class families with full time jobs being forced to rely on food banks because after paying all the bills, there is nothing left to fill refrigerator.

Make no mistake: we continue to glean the grocers and the growers and have impressive rates of recovery. We continue to tap local donations for food through events and food drives. Local government contributes support to the food bank. So do private donors. But these sources are not enough to meet the volumes confronting us.

We are requesting \$2 million for the biennium to ensure that we can maintain at least the current level of service to our region. I believe all of you have been apprised of this ask by Paul Rainey from Gallatin Public Affairs, who is directing this effort on our behalf in Salem. I understand that there are many priorities for the legislature. I can only say that governments across history have taken responsibility for ensuring that their populations

are fed as a core essential function of government necessary to maintain social stability and cohesion. I hope you continue to support this broad and nonpartisan coalition of regional nonprofits, churches, businesses, local governments, and donors who keep the region fed. Your support is more vital than ever.

Sincerely,



Scott Cooper
Executive Director

TO:

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