

Submitter: Jessica Vialpando  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, Vice-Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jessica Vialpando and I live in Malheur County. I am a parent and volunteer community organizer, and I worked with children ages 0-6 in the county for 6 years as a speech-language pathologist. I am writing in strong support of access to food for our youth. We know that when we all have access to food, we're all better off. Kids do better in school, our families' health and well-being improves, and our economy thrives through the support of local businesses. This is true in every corner of Oregon—in rural, urban, and suburban communities alike. When all of our children are getting the food that they need, all of Oregon thrives. Access to food should not depend on where we were born. I urge you to envision an Oregon where anyone, especially children, who needs food can get it.

I support food for Oregon's youth because I have seen firsthand the effects of hunger on young children in my community, where 61% of the county's households are experiencing financial hardship, and 23.9% of children experience poverty (source: 2024 Oregon by the Numbers, TFFF). Did you know that 90% of a child's brain development occurs before age 5? Children in Oregon who experience food insecurity are being unfairly and disproportionately disadvantaged during the years of their most critical development, simply because of their birthplace. Access to healthy, culturally appropriate food is our moral duty, and supporting it in the budget would have an immediate impact on the ability for children in my community to eat. Oregon is facing a hunger crisis, and it is getting worse by the day, thanks in no small part to the disastrous gutting of federal social safety programs by the Trump/Musk administration. Food pantries across the state are confronting record-breaking levels of demand – the Oregon Food Bank has never seen this level of urgent need in its 40+ years of food banking.

Food for All will allow low-income Oregon youth to access the grocery benefits they need to thrive and will build on successful, community-driven navigator models to ensure trust and community safety. You have the power to help end child hunger in Oregon, and this is why I am urging you to support food for our children in Oregon's budget. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Jessica Vialpando