

February 10, 2026

Subject: North Tillamook County Food Bank Infrastructure

To: Members of the Oregon Legislature Ways and Means Capital Construction Sub-committee

As the former Neah-Kah-Nie School District Superintendent and current Nehalem Bay Health Center & Pharmacy board chair, I am writing in **support** of the North County Food Bank (NCFB) New Distribution Facility Capital Project. The NCFB has been an integral part of the North County community for over three decades.

When the Nehalem Bay Health District was forced to vacate the old hospital building in Wheeler (due to being uninhabitable), NCFB began searching for an alternative location for their distribution as they had been tenants of the building since 1993. The search for alternate space proved fruitless, leading NCFB purchased property to build a modest distribution site.

Partnerships with places such as the Lower Nehalem Community Trust's Aldercreek Community Garden, local farms and grocery stores, and the Oregon Food Bank provide much of the food distributed, with NCFB purchasing the rest to ensure a well-rounded package of groceries. In addition, they regularly conduct food drives with the Emergency Volunteer Corps of Nehalem Bay and local businesses. The NCFB has operated with local volunteer and financial support since the beginning, meeting the needs of my neighbors every week for 33 years.

Recently I heard that there has been a 51% increase in visits to food pantries across Oregon in the past 24 months. Tillamook County tends to track above the state average regarding food scarcity – making me realize even more how this project is necessary to our community.

As a resident of Tillamook County, I have witnessed how food insecurity negatively impacts individual, family and community health.

The North County community is one of neighbors helping neighbors and part of the fabric of my community. I see firsthand how important the Food Bank is—not only for those who rely on it, but for the overall health and resilience of North Tillamook County. Investing in core infrastructure that supports food access is a practical, long-term solution that provides a safety net, especially as food security becomes more unstable.

This request is focused and responsible. The funding sought is limited to essential utilities, an infrastructure investment that will serve the community for decades. I believe this project is the right solution for my neighbors.

I respectfully urge you to support this request. Thank you for your consideration and service.

Sincerely,
Paul Erlebach
Manzanita, OR 97130