

Enrolled

Senate Memorial 1

Sponsored by Senator CARTER

To the President of the United States, the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, and the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture:

We, your memorialists, the Senate of the State of Oregon, in legislative session assembled, respectfully represent as follows:

Whereas the federal poverty guidelines published by the United States Department of Health and Human Services rely upon a measure of poverty formulated on the basis of 1963 household consumption patterns and budgets, adjusted only by increases in the cost of living; and

Whereas the federal poverty guidelines do not account for the enormous growth in the cost of energy and in the costs of households with two working adults, including the costs of child care and adequate nutrition, or for an eightfold increase in the cost of housing and a thirteenfold increase in the cost of medical care; and

Whereas the federal poverty guidelines do not measure the effectiveness of noncash public benefit programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, in meeting the needs of low-income families; and

Whereas the federal poverty guidelines provide the basis for eligibility for Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs, the Weatherization Assistance Program, Head Start, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, the State Children's Health Insurance Program, Community Development Block Grant funds awarded to municipalities, local governments and neighborhoods and the Job Corps; and

Whereas there is widespread agreement that the federal poverty guidelines do not accurately measure economic deprivation in these times; and

Whereas federal agencies that administer public benefits programs have developed alternative measures of well-being which are regularly updated and improved, such as the United States Department of Agriculture's measure of food insecurity, the United States Department of Health and Human Services' measures of child well-being and rates of uninsurance and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's measure of housing quality; and

Whereas despite Oregon's high Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participation rate of 79 percent of all eligible households, the United States Department of Agriculture rates food insecurity in Oregon higher than the national average, with Oregon being the third hungriest state in the nation; and

Whereas Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits are based on a Thrifty Food Plan that meets the most basic nutritional requirements but does not adequately account for the higher costs of fresh fruits, vegetables and healthful food; and

Whereas the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) authorizes the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture to carry out pilot projects to provide incentives to encourage households participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables and other healthful foods, but the secretary has not yet issued guidance for the pilot projects; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Oregon:

That the Congress of the United States of America is urged to pass legislation directing an agency of the federal government to establish a measure of poverty for use in the determination of eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and other federal anti-poverty programs that truly reflects economic deprivation based on current costs for housing and basic needs, current patterns of household consumption and the prevalence of families with two parents working outside of the home; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture is urged to issue guidelines for the implementation of pilot projects under section 4141 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) and specifically to approve projects that encourage households to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables and other healthful foods; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this memorial shall be sent to the President of the United States, to the Senate Majority Leader, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the chair of the Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support of the Committee on Ways and Means of the United States House of Representatives, to the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture and to each member of the Oregon Congressional Delegation.

Adopted by Senate April 14, 2009

Secretary of Senate

President of Senate