



*Helping People Help Themselves*

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April 16, 2013

The Honorable State Senator Richard Devlin, Co-Chair  
The Honorable State Representative Peter Buckley, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways & Means  
Oregon Legislature

Dear Co-Chairs and Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to give input on the 2014 budget. Demand for emergency food has grown in Jackson County as our state's economy has declined. Many residents are still unemployed as the unemployment rate has remained stubbornly high. Thousands of families are turning to the ACCESS food pantries in search of food in record numbers. As the designated Regional Food Bank for emergency food distribution, ACCESS provided 3 million pounds of food (56,000 pounds weekly) to hungry individuals and families in fiscal year 2011-12. This reflected an increase of 10% in the number of people receiving food than in the previous year.

We recognize the Great Recession has brought reduced state revenues at a time when public assistance is needed the most. We have seen the direct effects first hand in the unprecedented volume of emergency food boxes that were distributed in the last year. Last year, the ACCESS pantries/agencies gave out over 45,000 food boxes to hungry families.

The Oregon Hunger Response Fund (HB 5015- Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services budget) plays a huge role in helping meet those increased hunger demands all across the state. The Fund invests in food and the capacity to move food through the Oregon Food Bank Network of 20 regional food banks and 950 food pantries and other partner agencies. Statewide the Oregon Hunger Response Fund leverages private-sector community support for the food bank network.

Here in Jackson County the Fund is used to support our perishable grocery recovery program, Fresh Alliance. Through the program, ACCESS picks up daily frozen meat, dairy, deli and milk products from all the Albertsons, Fred Meyer and Wal-Mart stores in the Medford area. These highly nutritious foods that was previously thrown away into dumpsters and taken to landfills is now safely recovered and delivered to individuals and families experiencing hunger. Over the past biennium this program has leveraged and delivered over 1 million pounds of food providing over 1 million meals for hungry people.

State partnership with non-profits and the many businesses that donate is critical in the fight against hunger. A small annual increase of \$375,000 in funding, shared among the 20 regional food banks across Oregon, will provide a high amount of food to struggling families all across the state and in particular in Jackson County. The Oregon Hunger Response Fund enables the

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Oregon Food Bank Network to acquire bulk food and build additional capacity to feed hungry people. Please consider in your deliberations the effective role that this Fund plays in providing an essential human need. Thank you again for this opportunity to give input into the budget process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Philip Yates".

Philip Yates, Director  
ACCESS Nutrition Programs