



SB 1541 Testimony
Senate Finance and Revenue Committee
February 5, 2014

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Good afternoon. I am John Burt, Dallas, Oregon, and I am the Executive Director of Farmers Ending Hunger an Oregon non-profit corporation. I am in this position after a 33 year career with Oregon State University Extension Service and also serving for the past 19 years on the board of Marion Polk Food Share in Salem. Farmers Ending Hunger came about because the founder, Fred Ziari, when confronted with the hunger statistics in Oregon about eight years ago came to the conclusion: "Who better to feed hungry people than farmers". Fred felt that if asked, farmers would respond to the challenge. They have.

Over the past seven years Oregon farmers and ranchers have donated 11.6 million pounds of high quality food commodities to Farmers Ending Hunger. After processing the net result has been about 8 million pounds of finished products delivered to Oregon Food Bank. Last year the farmers and ranchers donated 2.4 million pounds to us. The composition of these donations included about 800,000 pounds of potatoes, 600,000 pounds of onions, 250 head of cattle, 400,000 pounds of processed vegetables, 185,000 pounds of pancake mix and 37,000 pounds of fresh fruit.

The model works well and our organization is committed expanding the numbers of farmers and ranchers contributing and the amount of food products donated. One of the highest priorities for us and for Oregon Food Bank is to increase the amount of fresh food such as fruits and vegetables being delivered to the food bank network. We believe that the tax credit reinstated by SB 1541 will serve as an effective tool to help us reach that goal.

In summary I believe that SB 1541 will help for several reasons:

- First, it will provide some relief to the bottom line to these farming and ranching businesses. We are asking a lot of them financially and their ability to donate depends on them being healthy businesses.
- A new tax deduction will give us a reason to reach out to farmers and ranchers and will create a buzz around the hunger issue. It may be the one new thing that gets a farmer's attention and starts our conversation with them.
- The passage of SB 1541 will say to farmers and ranchers that what they are doing is important and that the state of Oregon, in this case the Oregon Legislature, recognizes the value of what they are doing to fight hunger and is offering some support. It will also send that same message to hungry people in Oregon.

The board of Farmers Ending Hunger has endorsed SB 1541. We encourage your support for the passage of SB 1541.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to share with you today something we are passionate about.