



Partners for a
Hunger-Free Oregon

Ending hunger before it begins.

To: Human Services and Housing Committee

From: Patti Whitney-Wise, ED, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon (PHFO)

Subject: TANF

Date: February 25, 2015

We all want to live in an Oregon where families can achieve their dreams. For kids it means succeeding in school. For adults, it can mean pursuing a degree, succeeding at work, starting a business or becoming a leader in the community. When every family has enough nutritious food to eat, a place to call home and opportunities to move forward, we'll build stronger communities that we can all live in, raise our families in and enjoy.

We all know that our economy isn't working for all Oregonians right now. Stagnant wages and high costs of living make it increasingly hard for working families to afford the essentials - like trips to the grocery store, doctor's visits and a safe place to call home. Studies show that 653,000 Oregonians don't have consistent access to food—more than population of Portland.

Hunger results from family economic instability. And strengthening family economic stability is the single most powerful tool for ending hunger.

Today we focus on one important piece of the puzzle to help families succeed. We are part of the TANF Alliance, supporting reinvestments in TANF so that families have the pathways and supports they need to move up and out of poverty. We also know that helping families move out of poverty is the best pathway for a child to succeed in school.

I have submitted the TANF Alliance requests to bolster the DHS reinvestments by another \$10 million. Combined, these two pieces reinvest about half of what was cut during the recession in new ways to target needed services more appropriately. In addition, we asked Representative Piluso to submit the really big idea bill so that this committee can see just how far we have fallen in helping low-income families—it is time we reverse that trend.

We all want to live in a more prosperous, stable Oregon where everyone can afford the essentials for a healthy, full life. Please pass the most robust package of reinvestments possible so that families on TANF can achieve the dream of a stable and prosperous life.