



Oregon TANF Alliance

Strengthening Families, Protecting Children

Including: Central City Concerns • Children First for Oregon • Community Action Partnership of Oregon
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon • Oregon Center for Public Policy • Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Housing Authorities • Oregon Hunger Task Force • Oregon Law Center
Oregon Women's Rights Coalition • Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon • Urban League of
Portland

TANF Alliance Recommendations: Help Families Thrive

February 2015

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) keeps children safe and with their families. TANF stabilizes households with financial assistance, while connecting them to supportive services.

During the Great Recession, the legislature sought to maintain the safety net rather than cut access, and keep families together. Now with the economy improving, funding for targeted services need to be bolstered to help families increase income through work.

The TANF Alliance is pleased that the Department of Human Services (DHS) has engaged with advocates on a variety of policy issues and reinvestments. We support the DHS reinvestment package as a good first step.

So that families have a firm pathway out of poverty and towards a more stable income, we recommend the following additional investments to the DHS package, using some of the additional savings from TANF caseload reductions:

- A) Increase flexible support services funds in the reinvestment package, implementing in January, rather than July 2016. (\$2 million)
- B) Expand contracts with community-based organizations in the reinvestment package. (\$3 million)
- C) Fund a study of TANF leavers to identify the targeted supports that are needed to keep families moving forward, rather than falling back into poverty. (\$1 million)
- D) Raise the countable income limit at the front end to allow more families to access TANF before they become homeless, (\$3 million) and raise the back-end income limit in January, rather than July 2016. (\$1 million)

The additional \$10 million in services outlined here will ensure more family stability, helping both children and their parents succeed at school and at work.





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For more information, contact Patti Whitney-Wise, patti@oregonhunger.org





Partners for a
Hunger-Free Oregon

Ending hunger before it begins.

To: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services

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

Subject: TANF

Date: March 2, 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.

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, in addition to the \$30 million in the Governor's budget. 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.