



Partners for a
Hunger-Free Oregon

Ending hunger before it begins.

To: House Human Services and Housing Committee
From: Patti Whitney-Wise, Executive Director
Re: HB 2194 - General Assistance Pilot program – **Support**
Date: March 4, 2015

Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon and the Oregon Hunger Task Force are concerned that adults with disabilities are being left behind. Oregonians with disabilities should have nutritious meals, safe housing, and adequate medical care.

Yet all too often, they struggle just to survive. It often takes between 1 – 3 years to receive federal disability benefits. In the meantime, their health conditions worsen and they often fall into poverty. Some die before getting help.

Oregon has a solution: In the past, the General Assistance program provided a bridge loan program for adults who were waiting for federal assistance. This program provided minimal support to help with housing and other needs. It also provided assistance with the federal application process.

We support HB 2194, a bill that will pilot the best means of providing needed assistance to adults while they wait for federal disability payments to start.

Restoring the General Assistance Program Makes Sense:

- **Oregonians with disabilities are able to stabilize and get help applying for federal benefits.** This helps them and the communities in which they live.
- **Oregon gets reimbursed for its costs.** When Oregonians with disabilities are approved for federal SSI/SSDI benefits, the state gets reimbursed. Up to 70% of the cash assistance provided by the state is recovered.

General Assistance is a wise investment and a good deal. Individuals with disabilities who fall into poverty or homelessness often end up in emergency rooms, jails, or shelters, and the cost of rehabilitation can be much higher. Federal disability benefits help cover the cost of housing and other necessities and infuse money into local economies.

We ask that you please pass HB 2194.