



Mission: To eliminate hunger and its root causes...because no one should be hungry.

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Testimony in support of HB 4110
SENATE FINANCE & REVENUE COMMITTEE
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Hunger is an epidemic in Oregon. In an average month, an estimated 260,000 people eat food they received from the Oregon Food Bank Network, which is composed of 21 regional food banks that serve the entire state and Clark County, WA. Lack of income is the single biggest risk factor for hunger. Our biennial Hunger Factors research shows that most access food assistance to stretch their household budget because their income is not sufficient, including people who are employed full time.

Food alone doesn't end hunger. On a fundamental level, hunger is an income issue. The Earned Income Tax Credit puts income into the hands of working families. Oregon Food Bank supports HB 4110 with its focus on families with small children. Having said that, we support increasing the refundability of the EITC for all eligible tax filers as a matter of good policy. The EITC is as an effective tool to helping families meet basic needs such as food. To fight poverty and hunger, Oregon must utilize all the tools at its disposal.

The cost of living in Oregon is rising, making it difficult for families to get by. According to the USDA, the monthly cost of food for a family four range from a low-end of \$563 to a high of \$1062.20 depending on the ages of the kids.

Too many households with children seek food assistance from the Oregon Food Bank Network partner agencies. The impact of malnourished children is enormous. Healthy development, learning ability, and emotional maturity all depend on the child's family ability to afford and acquire food. Oregon Food Bank has launched an initiative to detect early and treat child hunger, partnering with health organizations.

Oregon Food Bank's most recent survey on hunger highlights the role we play in the household budget, helping families stretch the dollar. We distributed over 10,000 surveys with close to 55% responding. We found that many households turned to food assistance programs to stretch their budget. This included getting food from neighbors, friends, or family.

- 79% of households w/kids have incomes at or below the Federal Poverty Level
- 56% of households said regular food support helped with their monthly budget.
- 35% of households said that assistance from a food pantry allow them to pay a utility bill.
- 29% of households were able to pay rent or mortgage.

Make no mistake. Hunger is an income issue. Charity alone is not enough to end hunger. Government programs are not enough. It takes an economy to produce more family wage jobs. Until that happens, the EITC can help families earning income but not enough to meet basic needs. Thank you.