



Testimony in support of SB 398
Senate Committee on Workforce
Submitted by Anneliese Koehler, Public Policy Advocate, Oregon Food Bank
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Oregon Food Bank supports SB 398 and its efforts to increase Oregon's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) participation rates. One of the best remedies to hunger and poverty is a job with good pay and benefits. The EITC encourages and rewards work by minimizing the impact of payroll and income taxes for low and moderate income tax filers, especially those with children.

At its root, hunger is an income issue. When Oregonians cannot find work or jobs with sufficient hours, wages and benefits to meet basic needs, they turn to their local food pantry to provide enough food for their families. In Oregon, we are still seeing record levels of need for food assistance; the USDA ranks Oregon's food insecurity rate as the 6th highest in the nation. Oregon Food Bank's own numbers reflect that as well. Last year, we served an average of 270,000 Oregonians a month, a record high that has not decreased since the height of the Great Recession.

We know that strong safety net programs like SNAP, TANF and EITC are key to bringing families out of poverty and giving the resources to feed their families. In Oregon, a quarter of eligible families did not claim the EITC credit in 2013, the third worst participation rate in the nation. Oregon can do better. This is money left on the table for working families struggling to make ends meet. A strong, robust EITC participation rate means that Oregon families have more resources for rent, utilities, food and transportation. We urge you to vote yes on SB 398 and help Oregon's families meet their basic needs.

oregonfoodbank.org

Oregon Food Bank
Headquarters - Portland
7900 NE 33rd Drive
Portland, OR 97211-1918
503-282-0555

Oregon Food Bank -
Washington County Services
1870 NW 173rd Avenue
Beaverton, OR 97006-0817
503-439-6510

Oregon Food Bank -
Tillamook County Services
PO Box 1344
Tillamook, OR 97141-1344
503-842-3154

Oregon Food Bank -
Southeast Oregon Services
773 S Oregon Street
Ontario, OR 97914-3914
541-889-9206

