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Testimony on Oregon Health Authority Budget HB 5026
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
Submitted by Kara Smith
March 8th, 2017

FOOD for Lane County respectfully requests that the Farm Direct Nutrition Program for WIC families and low-income seniors be funded at \$3.3 million and \$434,000 respectively. These programs provide redeemable vouchers for produce at farmer's markets and roadside farm stands providing access to fresh healthy food while supporting our local farmers.

In Lane County, 1 in 3 individuals qualify for an emergency food box and over 50% of Lane County children qualify for free and reduced price lunch. Not to mention, while the rest of the United States saw a decrease in hunger and food insecurity, Oregon was one of the few states that saw a marked increase according to the latest USDA Food Insecurity in the US report.

We need all hands on deck in fighting hunger in our county and across our state. Now is not the time to be cutting back on programs that help those most vulnerable-especially pregnant women, children and seniors.

We operate both a Summer Food Service Program with over 50 sites in rural and urban Lane County, serving close to 3,000 meals a day in the summer, a Cereal for Youth program, and facilitate children's snack pack programs. The need to help get more fresh produce and healthy meals to families has only grown over the years. Additionally, each time our Senior Grocery Program and Meals on Wheels program has an opening, it is immediately filled. Every day, we witness the need in our community. We simply cannot afford to reduce spending in critical food assistance programs at a time when hunger has reached a sustained high.

The Governor's recommended budget for 2017-19 discontinues a \$300,000 one-time fund infusion which will adversely affect the participation of seniors and WIC participants and their ability to access fresh Oregon produce. Discontinuing investments in this program also hurts our small farmers.

FOOD for Lane County is an equal
Opportunity provider and a member of



Please do all you can to make a difference for the many parents, children and seniors who struggle daily to access healthy and nutritious food by fully funding the Farm Direct Nutrition Program.

Thank you for your consideration.