

**From:** Kara Smith  
**To:** [JWMTR Exhibits](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB 5012  
**Date:** Monday, March 20, 2017 4:58:38 PM

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Dear Co-Chair Johnson, Co-Chair Gomberg, and members of the Subcommittee,

We want to thank you for taking time to serve in our legislature.

At Food for Lane County, we believe that food is the cornerstone of good health, educational success, and economic progress. We are all aware of the hunger statistics. How many children qualify for free and reduced lunch in our communities. How many seniors aren't getting adequate nutrition. How many parents are rationing food to pay for housing and utilities. While many states across the country have begun to see a decrease in those that are food insecure, Oregon's hunger rate has gotten worse. Oregon experienced the nation's highest spike in its food security rate despite 50 consecutive months of state job growth. Oregon food insecurity rate is 16.1 % compared to the national average of 13.7%.

In an effort to better understand and address why emergency food need is so high and why recipients seek our help, every two years we survey people who receive a food box (our most recent survey included over 1,100 households). When asked what would help improve their situation and make it so a food box was less necessary for them and their family, in 2008 and 2010 in order of priority, food box recipients reported employment, a higher wage and healthcare. In 2012 and 2015, food box recipients reported, in order of priority: employment, affordable housing as second, and third-a higher wage.

For these reasons, and for the fact that one child in every Lane County classroom experienced homelessness this last year, we are urging you to provide \$50 million in funding for the State Homeless Assistance Program (SHAP) and the Emergency Housing Account (EHA) to help assist our neighbors experiencing housing insecurity, because we know that it has a direct impact on families' and individuals' ability to feed themselves. Over and over we hear about that heartbreaking choice- do I eat or do I pay rent. The Emergency Housing Account provides short-term assistance to prevent or end homelessness and the State Homeless Assistance Program provides funding for emergency shelters-it also helps many of our partners serve those who have nowhere to turn.

In the end, it isn't just about dollars, it's about people. Homes provide everyone with an opportunity to succeed in life. To help end hunger, we need to address why it is people cannot afford the food they need to thrive. The Legislature has an opportunity to make an immediate improvement in every part of Oregon by expanding funding for EHA and SHAP this year.

Thank you,

FOOD for Lane County

Eugene, Oregon