



Partners *for a*
Hunger-Free Oregon

Ending hunger before it begins.

To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
From: Matt Newell-Ching, Public Affairs Director
Subject: Statement on proposed DHS Budget, SB 5526
Date: April 5, 2017

We envision an Oregon that is hunger-free, healthy, and thriving. Yet according to USDA's most recent data, hunger is rising in Oregon even as it declines nationwide. One in six households in Oregon struggle to afford food. Oregon's affordable housing crisis means families are choosing between paying for food and keeping a roof over their heads.

While hunger impacts every corner of Oregon, it is not experienced equally. **Renters** are six times more likely to experience hunger than homeowners – significantly higher than that disparity nationwide. Hunger is higher for **households led by single mothers** in Oregon than in the rest of the nation. Many moms skip meals so their kids can eat. Hunger is disproportionately experienced by **communities of color**. Hunger is higher in **rural Oregon** than in other parts of the state.

Budgets are moral documents. They reflect Oregon's priorities. We were disappointed in the proposed budgets from the Governor and the Ways and Means Co-Chairs that called for deep cuts to programs that address hunger and its root causes. We can do better.

We must not balance the budget on the backs of the one in six households struggling to afford food. We urge lawmakers to fund effective efforts to address hunger and its root causes in the Human Services Budget, including, but not limited to:

- Prevent homelessness and assist families out of homelessness by funding the **State Homeless Assistance Program** and the **Emergency Housing Authority** (\$50m).
- Provide dignity to Oregonians with disabilities, who are likely to qualify for long-term disability by continuing funding for **General Assistance**.
- Fund **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** at levels that not force the state to impose harsher time limits. Benefit levels are long-overdue for an adjustment from 1996-levels. Funding for **Employment-Related Day Care (ERDC)** should ensure families have access to safe, affordable child care.
- Leverage community-level solutions to hunger by fully-funding the **Oregon Hunger Response Fund** (\$3.5-\$4m).
- Promote collaboration to reduce hunger by the public, private, and nonprofit sectors by continuing the effective work of the **Oregon Hunger Task Force** (\$150k).