



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT SB 1029

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & EARLY CHILDHOOD

SUBMITTED BY PHILLIP KENNEDY-WONG

APRIL 10, 2017

Oregon Food Bank requests the Senate Committee on Human Services & Early Childhood to refer SB 1029 to the full Ways & Means Committee with a “do pass” recommendation for its consideration of fully funding the Farm Direct Nutrition Program at \$3.3 million for WIC families and \$376,000 for eligible low-income seniors for the 2017-19 biennium.

The program provides coupons and vouchers redeemable at farmers markets and roadside stands, going back in to the economy to support Oregon farmers and while promoting the health of seniors and mothers and their children.

Oregon has a hunger crisis. Despite 50 consecutive months of job growth, Oregon had the highest rate spike in hunger in the nation over the last three years. Oregon’s food insecurity rate is 16.1 percent as compared to the national average of 13.7 percent.¹

Our state cannot afford the long term financial and social costs of cutting food assistance programs at a time when hunger is rising. In fact, Oregon needs to be bold in its investment in food assistance programs especially those that serve vulnerable populations like seniors, pregnant women, and children. With congressional cuts expected, Oregon cannot rely on federal food programs alone to fight hunger. We need to diversify our toolbox of state investments in food assistance programs to be successful.

The Governor’s Recommended Budget for 2017-19 is just \$260,000 for the Farm Direct Nutrition Program, discontinuing \$300,000 in one-time funds from the 2015-17 biennium. The loss of one-time funds is a reduction in our effort to reverse the recent spike in hunger. If adopted, there will be fewer seniors and mothers and their children able access to fresh and healthy Oregon produce. The amount of individuals losing benefits would be enough to overfill Gil Coliseum in Corvallis!

Divesting in the food programs while hunger is on the rise is not a recipe for economic and social progress nor is it a wise budget decision. This is why the Legislature must prioritize services like the Farm Direct Nutrition in the Public Health Division of the Oregon Health Authority.

Please make a difference to 100,000 mothers and their children in the WIC program and 45,000 seniors by fully funding the Farm Direct Nutrition Program.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ Food Insecurity in Oregon: Considering the Role of Housing, Oregon State University School of Public Policy and the Rural Studies Program, October 2016

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

