

Testimony in support of SB 398
House Committee on Business and Labor
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. 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 to meet their basic needs such as rent, utilities, food and transportation. We urge you to vote yes on SB 398 and help Oregon's families meet their basic needs.