



Partners *for a*
Hunger-Free Oregon

Ending hunger before it begins.

To: House Committee on Early Childhood and Family Supports
From: Matt Newell-Ching, Public Affairs Director
Subject: Statement of Support for HB 4081
Date: February 8, 2018

We believe that everyone deserves to be free from hunger. Yet one in seven families in Oregon experiences food insecurity. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon supports HB 4081, which takes a small but important step toward updating quarter-century old cash assistance levels in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. It does this by ensuring that any savings from TANF due to reduced caseloads will be re-invested directly toward assisting families and toward job placement.

Roughly 40,000 Oregon kids are in households that participate in TANF. While TANF families consistently report that the current cash assistance levels are not nearly enough to meet the costs of housing, utilities, transportation, child care, and other necessities for life, it's also a lifeline. One participant said that after leaving a domestic abuse situation, TANF was one of the things that gave her "courage."

Consider this: In 1970, the maximum Oregon cash assistance grant was equivalent to about 71 percent of the federal poverty line. Today, the maximum grant for a parent with two children is \$506 per month, the equivalent of **just 29 percent of the poverty line**. Due to the nature of TANF as a federal block grant without inflation adjustments, the cash grant has not been adjusted for inflation in nearly a quarter-century.

Every child deserves a stable home environment with a safe place to sleep, enough food to eat, and a trauma-free environment. Passing HB 4081 will not by itself make up for decades of eroding levels of assistance, but it is a step in the right direction toward ensuring that kids and families facing hard times have a foundation on which to rebuild their lives.