



March 17, 2020

Governor Kate Brown
House Speaker Tina Kotek, H-269
House Majority Leader Barbara Smith Warner, H-295
House Republican Leader Christine Drazen, H-395
Senate President Peter Courtney, S-201
Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick, S-223
Senate Republican Leader Herman E. Baertschiger Jr., S-323

Oregon Food Bank is doing everything we can to respond to the pandemic and ensure that our food assistance system remains strong. We are committed first and foremost to the health and safety of our community – to our clients, volunteers and the broader food stream. We've already taken a host of critical steps to ensure families have access to the food they need while preventing the spread of COVID-19.

We appreciate your leadership at this time and would like to outline three areas of need for you to consider in the coming days and weeks.

1. Allocate \$2 million to support food purchase and distribution.

- a. Increased need: As you are probably aware, the Oregon Food Bank network serves 800,000 people per year when there is no disaster present. We have not yet seen a rise in the number of Oregonians accessing emergency food but we expect an increase shortly as lay-offs, healthcare and childcare costs strain household budgets.
- b. Increased need to purchase food: We are shifting the ways in which we procure food for distribution in order to reduce food handling by volunteers. For example, within the next 48 hours we will be ending the pick-up of donations from our grocery partners because the food requires a prohibitive amount of handling and sorting. We are hopeful that through federal action more food will be available to the food banking network across the county through TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program). However, TEFAP commodities would be several weeks out and we need to plan for delays in both political processes and supply chains.
- c. A reminder that Oregon Food Bank leads the statewide network of 21 Regional Food Banks and over 1400 food assistance sites. Additional state resources will be allocated to meet needs across the state.

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2. **Activate the National Guard to support food distribution as needed.** Unlike other disaster scenarios, the pandemic is not and cannot result in a massive influx of volunteers. It is likely that we will need additional people power throughout the state as soon as two to four weeks from now. The types of roles we envision include ware house receiving, transporting food pallets and logistical support for open air style food distributions. These roles will be critical both in Portland and in targeted locations across the state.
3. **Protect current nutrition and human service programs.** Nutrition programs and other human services are going to be more critical than ever as the economic impacts of the pandemic will last beyond the pandemic itself. In particular, we want to ensure that the school meals programs as part of the Student Success Act move toward implementation. We will continue to advocate with our Congressional delegation for robust economic stimulus at the federal level. We are asking that we do not make cuts to essential human and nutrition services at the state level. Rather, we encourage consideration of longer term solutions to hunger, homeless services and housing assistance among other human services.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to reach out with questions and concerns.

Sincerely,



Susannah Morgan, CEO

