



To: Joint Committee on the First Special Session of 2020
From: Annie Kirschner, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
RE: Ensuring access to food during the COVID-19 pandemic
Date: June 22, 2020

Now more than ever, it is clear that we're all in this together. As a state our health and wellbeing is only as strong as our most marginalized neighbors and family members. As we take unprecedented measures to protect our communities, this week's special session should ensure all Oregonians have access to nutritious food during this crisis and that the rights of those facing oppression and poverty are held first and foremost in the state's policy and budget decisions.

Here are 5 priorities:

Protect Oregonians- When balancing the state budget, don't cut human services or education. These are critical investments during the pandemic and in our economic recovery, and any cuts will only deepen the hardship families are facing, especially for those already in poverty.

Pandemic Food Access- Food insecurity has doubled since March. The state boosted the amount of food going to food banks, but now needs to finally invest in better access to critical public nutrition assistance during the pandemic and recovery. Direct coronavirus relief funds to community outreach for SNAP and to help schools and youth programs package and deliver free grab and go meals for kids until students return to school.

Economic Relief for All- Ask the Oregon Legislature to provide an ongoing economic relief for immigrant workers. The Oregon Worker Relief Fund provides lifesaving financial support directly to Oregon immigrant workers who have lost their jobs, yet despite paying taxes, are ineligible for unemployment benefits or federal stimulus checks. The state has taken a step in the right direction by providing one-time support for this fund, but this crisis requires an ongoing investment.

Housing- Every Oregonian deserves a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home. Too many people who rent their homes across Oregon are struggling to pay rent and put food on the table. During the special session, please extend the eviction moratorium past June 30, enact a repayment period, and enact foreclosure protections.

Racial Justice in Public Safety- Follow Black community leadership in addressing deep systemic changes to public safety, in addition to greater police accountability.