

**TESTIMONY FOR HB 2626 & HB 2639  
HOUSE HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING COMMITTEE  
SUBMITTED BY PHILLIP KENNEDY-WONG  
JANUARY 30, 2019**



Oregon Food Bank supports HB 2626 and HB 2639. Fighting hunger effectively requires an approach that takes into account: 1) an understanding of who is at risk to food insecurity (see table below) and 2) the specific needs of that population.

Food Insecurity Rates by Household Type		
	Hunger/Food Insecurity Rate (2015-2017)	
	Oregon	Rest of the U.S.
Couples with children	1.5%/10.0%	2.2%/9.5%
Couples without children at home	2.5%/5.4%	2.2%/5.7%
Single mothers	13.5%/34.0%	9.8%/31.1%
Alone		
- women	9.2/20.5%*	7.1%/15.3%
- men	6.3%/11.4%	6.5%/13.7%

Source: OSU 2018 Food Security Report

This means specific and targeted programs such as the federal Special Supplemental Food Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) program that serve over 99,000 children and 39,000 mothers in Oregon. Programs like WIC ensure that low-income families at very least can access healthy foods to meet the demands of pregnancy and child development.

The WIC program has been instrumental in helping millions of young families meet their nutritional needs when their income is not enough to afford food. These bills seek to close two gaps with state funds in the program by extending WIC nutrition benefits for:

- Children who have turned 5 but have not yet entered kindergarten, and therefore do not benefit from school nutrition services yet; and
- Moms through a child’s second birthday (currently moms lose nutrition support at 6 or 12 months).

There is probably no more important period health wise than the time from the start of a pregnancy for a mother to the start of kindergarten for the child. Research confirms and supports the positive benefits of proactive nutrition programs like WIC that help low-income families, specifically with better outcomes in maternal health, fewer premature births, fewer infant deaths, brain development in newborns, etc. This is why Oregon Food Bank developed a diagnostic tool for health care providers to screen for hunger among children of all ages and has invested in developing a school pantry program in low-income communities. And this is why Oregon Food Bank supports programs like WIC that can make a huge difference in the lives of mothers and children during this vulnerable period. The benefits can last a lifetime.

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