



To: House Committee on Human Services and Housing
From: Matt Newell-Ching, Public Affairs Director
Subject: Statement of Support for HB 3170 to Protect the Farm Direct Nutrition Program
Date: March 27, 2019

Everyone is better off when Oregonians have access to fresh, nutritious, local produce. Yet one in eight families in Oregon experiences hunger or food insecurity. Seniors and families often sacrifice food quality as a strategy to afford rent and other essentials.

Hunger-Free Oregon supports HB 3170, which protects the Farm Direct Nutrition Program.

What is the Farm Direct Nutrition Program?

"Farm Direct" helps low-income seniors, and families with kids under the age of five that participate in the WIC program: households receive a book of \$4 checks that can be redeemed at farmers markets and farm stands throughout Oregon. Oregon farmers earned nearly \$3.2 million from the programs in 2017-2018. Farm Direct participants cite many benefits, including access to nutritious food and a sense of community belonging.

HB 3170 Ensures Continued Funding for the Farm Direct Nutrition Program

HB 3170 is a bipartisan bill in to ensure Oregon can continue to support the same number of families and seniors with local produce as we do currently. It preserves one-time funding enacted in the 2017-2019 biennium, and establishes this level as baseline funding to ensure the stability of the program, which is good for families and seniors.

What would happen if HB 3170 doesn't pass?

Discontinuing \$1.2 million in one-time funds for the WIC and Senior Farm Direct Nutrition Programs (FDNP) would dramatically reduce the number of families able to purchase healthy, locally grown produce. In 2018 the Oregon Health Authority issued program vouchers to 54,000 WIC mothers and children, and 47,800 low-income seniors to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables direct from Oregon farmers.

Without additional state funding contained in HB 3170, 20,000 fewer nutritionally at-risk mothers and their children would be able to access fresh produce in 2020. The Senior FDNP would be effectively eliminated due to spending limitations of the matching federal grant which make state funding essential to defray the costs of certification and benefit distribution. Adverse effects also include reduced income to 600+ Oregon farmers who earned nearly \$3.2 million from the programs in 2017-2018.