

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 3038
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
SUBMITTED BY PHILLIP KENNEDY-WONG
APRIL 3, 2019**



Oregon Food Bank supports HB 3038. Food insecurity on America’s college campuses is real. The old romantic notion of hungry college students surviving temporarily on Top Ramen and Kraft Macaroni and Cheese is outdated. College is expensive more than ever. A recent study estimates that about half of American undergraduate students experience food insecurity.¹ Food insecurity impacts academic performance and the ability to successfully complete a two or four-year degree.

With rising tuition rates, unaffordable housing options, crowded dorms, expensive text books, high student fees and limited federal work study opportunities, it is no wonder that food insecurity among college students is a growing problem. There is probably no worse outcome for our higher education system than a student dropping out of college without a degree but with high student loans to repay. Student groups know this risk well. That’s why student organizations have reached out to Oregon’s food banks to help establish food pantries or mobile food distribution deliveries that serve students.

To date, there are 31 food pantries or food distributions at Oregon colleges and universities (See table 1). Some are run independently but the majority are run in partnership with the Oregon Food Bank Network.

TABLE 1. Pantries and food distribution at Oregon colleges and universities

<u>Public universities</u>	Oregon State University, Portland State University, Southern Oregon University, Western Oregon University, Oregon Institute of Technology
<u>Community colleges</u>	Mt. Hood Community College, Portland Community College, Lane Community College, Chemeketa Community College, Klamath Community College, Oregon Coast Community College, Southwest Oregon Community College, Umpqua Community College, Clackamas Community College
<u>Private institutions</u>	Lewis & Clark College, NW Christian University, Pacific University, Gutenberg College, Reed College, Willamette University

We recognize the limits of campus food pantries when compared to the benefits of the federal SNAP program. This is why we are supporting HB 3038. The bill is a starting point to addressing food insecurity with greater SNAP access on college campuses. Eligible students can apply for and maximize their SNAP benefits if they are able to participate in a qualified work study program. Income generated from a qualified work study program is not counted against SNAP benefit levels, thus allowing student to be able to buy more food and earn a modicum of income. Unfortunately, there are not enough federally funded work study positions in Oregon. A state sanctioned work study program would fill a tremendous need for the many work study eligible students unable to get into a federally funded work study program. HB 3038 would test the concept on a small scale with Oregon State University and Western Oregon University.

The benefit of a state work study program is but one of many possible tools that can help students succeed. This is why it is important to not only pilot this concept but for Oregon’s higher education system to conduct a comprehensive research study to understand the scope of food insecurity on Oregon’s campuses. The study would seek to better understand how students experience and cope with meeting their basic human needs. It also would inventory best practices from around the country, learning from the

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experiences of universities that have addressed food insecurity (See [“Still Hungry and Homeless in College”, a national study conducted by the Wisconsin Hope Lab.](#)) This understanding is critical to designing long and short goals that ensure the basic human needs of students are met within the higher education system or through intentional partnerships with other government agencies or private non-profits. Oregon State University Human Services Resource Center is a marvelous example of a comprehensive wrap-around facility that provides and coordinates access to a wide variety of services for students.

The combination of a state work study pilot project; and a systems wide research study would provide invaluable experience and information to creating a higher education system that maximizes the potential for every student to be successful. It would go a long ways toward creative effective and efficient outcomes than the current haphazard approach.

Please support HB 3038. Thank you for your consideration.

ⁱ Broton, K. A., & Goldrick-Rab, S. (2017). Going without: An exploration of food and housing insecurity among undergraduates. *Educational Researcher*, 47(2), 121-133; Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., & Hernandez, A. (2017). Hungry and homeless in college: Results from a national study of basic needs insecurity in higher education. Madison, WI: Wisconsin HOPE Lab; Nazmi, A., Martinez, S., Byrd, A., & Ritch, L. (2018). A systematic review of food insecurity among US students in higher education. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*.1-16

