



To: House Committee on Education
From: Matt Newell-Ching, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Subject: Informational Hearing Testimony
Date: May 20, 2019

Chair Doherty and Members of the Committee,

Enclosed please find four items for the record relating to today's hearing on hunger and food insecurity at college campuses in Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and submit written testimony on behalf of the following Oregonians:

- **Venus Barnes**, Community Engagement Coordinator, Portland Community College
- **Megan Patton-Lopez**, PhD, RDN, Assistant Professor of Community Health, Western Oregon University
- **LaTonya R. Freauf**, Food Pantry Coordinator, Portland Community College - Sylvania Campus
- Link to thesis of **Kiara Kashuba**: The Prevalence, Correlates, and Academic Consequences of Food Insecurity among University of Oregon Students, University of Oregon, 2017:
<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/22865>

03.18.19

To: Members of the House Committee on Education
From: Venus Barnes, Community Engagement Coordinator, Portland
Community College
Re: Food Insecurity on College Campuses

Thank you Madam Chair and Vice Chair and the Members of this
Committee,

My name is Venus Barnes, and I currently live in Housing located in
Oregon City. I'm in support of college students receiving adequate help
with covering their basic needs while attending community college.

Not too long ago I left an abusive marriage that I endured for 11 yrs with
our two kids. My goal was to go to college to be self sufficient and give my
kids a better life and a loving home. I enrolled in Portland community
College, at the time my kids were, 11yr and 16 mos. The first two years
were the hardest. I drove to Madras every single weekend for our youngest
to have visitations with his father. I worked 32 hrs a week and had a class
load of 9-10 credits per term- (12 is full time) and I was challenged to the
brink of life going through a divorce that was set out to destroy me. I'm a
survivor.

I finally saved \$3,500 for my first apartment using student loans. I lived in
Milwaukie for 2 years until the new max stop moved in, which contributed to
the idea of a causal rent increase of \$300 in addition to what I was paying.
This type of trend was rapidly replacing tenants for out of State funds and
empty apartments.

Like many, our family was not immune to the disease of greed. We had 30
days to decide to pay or be on the streets with the other families.

All that I had worked for and my dream of completing school was gone. I quit school and put all of my energy surviving yet another tragedy. I was at the end of Spring term and no means to afford child care for Summer term funds. I thought PCC was a nice idea but, the reality overwhelmed me. No friends, no family, I'm all alone again navigating the cold world. There is nothing kind about homelessness. There is nothing kind about hunger. There is nothing kind about desperately trying to find the light house amongst the storm.

I work with students everyday with similar stories and some more worse off than I when faced with decisions of lost hope. I hear stories of students eating only a potato for the whole day just before class and I'm quickly reminded of when I didn't eat for almost 2 days so that my kids didn't go without food. Homeless students I help in our food pantry remind me when I was couch surfing with my 16 mo old for a year and my oldest was at a different friend's house because 2 kids was too many at one.

The experience of hunger at a minimum = Sleepless nights, Stress, Scared, body aches, headaches, anxiety, depression, and many others but, most of all for me it was hopelessness. Hunger claws at my heart when I know we can do better. I come here along the side of Partners for Hunger Free Oregon in hopes that the ideas of expanding assistance to our College students is not just a nice idea but, one that I know can be achieved. By supporting the efforts moving these initiatives forward could easily mean life changing transformation for a college student. Our students should have equitable access to basic human needs: shelter, healthcare, and food. I urge you to please support these efforts you all hear and invest in our college students for a better future for Oregon.

Testimony – Oregon Advocacy Commissions Leadership
House Committee on Education, May 20, 2019, 3pm, Hearing Room D

Chair Doherty, Vice-Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chair Helt, and Members of the Committee:

I am Dr. Megan Patton-López, Assistant Professor of Community Health at Western Oregon University. Thank you for the invitation to comment on the important and intentional work of this committee. I am writing to share with you my efforts regarding food insecurity among college students in Oregon.

As a public health nutritionist with an emphasis in child and adolescent health, my work focuses on understanding the factors that impact access to nutrient dense food that is necessary for health, academic achievement and well-being. In January 2014, my colleagues and I published a peer-reviewed journal article documenting that 59% of students at Western Oregon University had experienced food insecurity during the past year. This study was the first to publish food insecurity among college students in the continental United States. Since 2014, additional studies have examined the experiences of food insecurity among students at community colleges and 4-year institutions across the country.

It is now fairly common place to find a food pantry located on college campuses. The intent is to provide a box of food for “emergency” situations. However, it seems students are relying on these boxes to meet their overall food needs. In fact, during the 2018-2019 academic year, the food pantry at Western Oregon University has distributed over 26, 287 pounds of food (October-April), with over 60% of the visits being among students. In order to meet the growing demand for food, pantry coordinators have developed a program in which faculty and staff can donate canned and boxed food items each month. During the past two years that I have been full time faculty at WOU, I have worked with many students who work 30 or more hours a week, plus take a full academic load of 12-18 credit hours. These students are working in order to afford the costs associated with tuition, books and supplies, and living expenses.

Currently, I am re-examining the experiences of food insecurity among students at Western Oregon University. The results of this project will be used to support programming and policies that seek to improve access to healthy food for students who experience time and financial constraints related to academics and employment. The findings of this work will be analyzed in June when the survey closes and the last of the focus groups are completed.

There are many dedicated staff and faculty at WOU committed to supporting students who struggle with food insecurity and financial hardship. I am certain that we will continue to think creatively and strive to find ways to lessen the negative impacts associated with low quality and inadequate food. However, our work is only a band-aid if we don’t address the root causes of food insecurity and financial hardship. Recent research in this area suggests that such an approach requires identifying and addressing policy, systems and environmental factors that contribute to financial hardship experienced by students and their families, particularly those from low-income, first-generation, and students of color.

I look forward to opportunities to contribute to the important work of this committee and academic and community partners across the state.

Sincerely,

Megan Patton-López, PhD, RDN

pattonlm@wou.edu

541-250-6011

05.17.19

To: The House Committee on Education

From: LaTonya Freauf, Food Pantry Coordinator, ASPCC Sylvania-PCC

Re: College Student Hunger

My name is LaTonya Freauf, I live in Tualatin, and I am here to advocate for the issue of college student hunger, both as student, a paid student leader within my college's food pantry, and as a single mother of two children. This topic is one which has been shamefully under-addressed within our state. For the most part, the state of Oregon only views student food insecurity and hunger, as a problem which only needs to be addressed in an official capacity, at a K-12 level. This is wrong.

As a paid student leader within my school, my job is one which fills me with great sorrow. Daily I encounter students, from all walks of life, who are trying to better their lives, and futures, through higher education. Far too many are struggling to maintain their day to day lives, due to food insecurity. It's a daily occurrence to talk with people on my campus who have not eaten in days. My college identifies at a staggering 66% food insecurity. This is wrong.

The circumstances which bring them to such a desperate point are varied as they are. I have expectant mothers, who are eating solely from my pantry. I have queer homeless youth, who have been ostracized from their parents for their sexual orientation, and without our campus pantry would starve. I have military veterans, who have bravely served this country, returning to college to use their hard earned GI Bill, and show up at my pantry window red faced, and won't make eye contact with me, because their new found civilian life has left them unable to feed themselves. I have international students who are unable to work to their student visa, and thus rely heavily on our campus pantry. The list, literally, goes on, and on, and on. This is wrong.

There's this myth which exists in our culture, which teaches that the poor starving college student narrative is, not just to be expected, but is somehow a rite of passage. And, that only after struggling through the colleges years, nutritionally deficient, that then, and only then, have you earned the right to have the basics. Let me speak plainly, you are worthy of these things by simply being born human. This is wrong.

Our planet provides a bountiful harvest, enough to easily feed every person on this planet. America itself produces enough food on its own, to completely eradicate this epidemic. The sheer volume of our food waste in this nation alone would solve it. Yet it persists. Why? Why are basic human rights, like access to adequate food, something that even needs to be advocated for in this first place? This is wrong.

It's my firm belief that the onus of solving or relieving food insecurity amongst its student body should NOT rest on the shoulders of an institute of higher learning. This is a burden to be

officially championed at a government level. So much time, money, and resources are wasted by leaving this burden resting on the backs of colleges. Their job is to educate students, so that they may become productive contributors to our economy, and responsible citizens of the future, NOT to act as a social service agency. This is wrong.

My ask of you today is to introduce legislation which would champion the college student food insecurity epidemic at the state level. I'm asking for a college hunger bill to be introduced, so that students are able to receive proper, and adequate, nutrition until they have graduated from college. I'm asking you to mandate college campuses should be hunger free zones. I'm asking you to make my job obsolete. This is right.

Respectfully,

LaTonya Freauf