

Good afternoon,

I'm writing to request your support for making \$4.56 million the new base budget for the Oregon Hunger Response Fund (OHRF) in the Oregon Department of Human Services budget for the 2021-2023 biennium by rolling up the 2019-2021 one-time funds.

As Executive Director of FOOD for Lane County, I see first-hand the positive impact that these funds make in our communities.

The demand for food assistance spiked when COVID hit, and many people who had just lost their jobs showed up at food pantries for the first time in their lives. We worked with our partner agency food pantries to distribute as much food as possible, and we added temporary mobile pantries in Eugene, Springfield, Cottage Grove and Oakridge.

The demand for food leveled off as people received their stimulus checks and additional unemployment benefits and other forms of temporary government assistance.

Then the wildfires came. We and many others responded initially by providing sandwiches and meals to evacuees living in local hotels. We subsequently worked with our partners up the McKenzie River to send groceries to relief centers in Leaburg, Rainbow and Blue River, assisting with the recovery effort in fire-devastated communities.

Between COVID and wildfires, many people in our community are struggling. Stimulus checks and more targeted government assistance programs are providing critical temporary support, and food assistance is helping many of our neighbors stretch their dollars to make ends meet.

Thank you for the Oregon Hunger Response Funds and additional food purchasing provided by the Oregon Legislature, which have been key sources of support for our statewide food assistance effort.

As a member of the Oregon Food Bank Network, FOOD for Lane County respectfully requests the same level of funding as the 2019-2021 biennium by calculating one-time funds as part of the base budget for the 2021-2023 biennium for the programs listed below.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Thank you for your service to the state of Oregon during this challenging time.

Tom Mulhern
Executive Director | FOOD for Lane County