

TO: House Committee on Education
FROM: Danita Harris, Oregon Food Bank
RE: Support for HB 2835 to Reduce Hunger on College Campuses
DATE: 02/11/2021



Chair Alonso León, Vice Chairs Neron and Weber, and members of the committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today; and we build community power to dismantle systems and policies that drive hunger and poverty. Our Network of 21 regional food banks and 1,400 partner agencies continue to work tirelessly to ensure that Oregonians are able to put food on the table in the wake of this pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 11 Oregonians were food insecure. **Today, nearly 1 in 5 people in our communities face hunger — a dramatic increase.** And the public health and economic impacts of the pandemic have fallen hardest on people who have faced systemic inequities for generations: communities of color, immigrants and refugees, single parents and caregivers, our trans and gender non-conforming neighbors, and college students.

A college education is a pathway out of poverty for many. However, the grim reality is that before the pandemic, 40% of 2-4 year college college students in Oregon faced hunger. When we examine those findings, we see that college communities occupying multiple intersections of oppression experience food insecurity at even greater rates. The impacts of food insecurity on students' academic success cannot be overstated.

Oregon Food Bank supports HB 2385 because having a navigator on staff to help students facing acute and chronic food insecurity will help students navigate the landscape of resources made available allowing them to focus on their education.

Our students need support. In the wake of COVID the need has grown even more expansively. Yet federal rules mean that college students face unique barriers to receiving SNAP and other types of assistance. Having dedicated staff helping students navigate this landscape and secure resources will have positive impacts and notable outcomes for a growing number of students across the state.

At Oregon Food Bank we know that the policy and budget decisions we make today have profound impacts on the lives of people for generations to come. Thank you to everyone who is working on crafting policies that uplift communities and make vital investments for the most vulnerable among us. **We express our strong support of HB 2385.** Thank you for your consideration.

Danita Harris, Oregon Food Bank

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