

DATE: March 22, 2023
TO: House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
FROM: Sammi Teo, Public Policy Advocate
RE: Support for HB 2990, Community Resilience Hubs



Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Levy and Levy, and members of the committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is "to eliminate hunger and its root causes... *because no one should be hungry.*" We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today, and we advocate to change policies that drive hunger and poverty.

Oregon Food Bank supports HB 2990, which will help Oregonians prepare for, thrive through, and recover from climate-related emergencies and other natural disasters. It creates a grant program through the Office of Resilience and Emergency Management (OREM)¹ that will go directly to communities to build and implement Community Resilience Hubs and networks.

HB 2990 comes at a critical time, as it is no secret that Oregon's emergency management services are stretched thin. Across the state, people of color, low-income, rural and disabled communities are hit hardest in times of disaster.² Community Resilience Hubs are trusted places with networks of care designed by and for communities to cultivate physical, social, and ecological well-being with a sense of belonging and safety. This can look like a physical building new or retrofitted with heating and cooling, air filtration, and emergency supplies; it can also look like a network of resource navigation, trusted communication, and services across districts. Importantly, each community will design its local hub to reflect their specific needs.

Coordination between community groups and local governments is critical for disaster preparation and resilience.

Coordination between community groups and local governments is critical for disaster preparation because it allows them to **mitigate each other's gaps when responding to a disaster and its impact on everyday life**. Coordination not only creates partnerships that allow them to learn from each other's experiences, but also promotes foundational knowledge for future generations to build upon.

¹ As a member of the Oregon Hunger Task Force, Oregon Food Bank coordinates closely with OREM to distribute emergency food and water across the state during extreme weather events or natural disasters, such as wildfires or ice storms. Most recently, we coordinated to bring clean water to Warm Springs in response to water infrastructure issues. Over the last few years, OREM has made strong connections and kept an open dialogue between the state and local communities – which is critical for making sure resources get to where they are most needed.

² A recent Tillamook County Community Assessment asked the Spanish-speaking community there how prepared they felt in case of a natural disaster – 30% felt they were "not at all prepared" and **0% felt "very prepared"**. This Assessment was conducted by Andrea Gonzalez, a member of the Policy Leadership Council at Oregon Food Bank.

We are stronger when we work together. At Oregon Food Bank, our years of experience responding to disasters across the state has taught us that availability of food during an emergency is just one piece of the resilience puzzle. For example, we can deliver food to a local community, but that alone does not guarantee the community knows food is available and how to access it. For community members who do not speak English, this information would need to be translated before being communicated. During serious disruptions, our ability to feed everyone who needs it would be exhausted in seconds if not for the support and resources provided by local communities and local governments.

Finally, coordination improves the cost-effectiveness of current funds, which in turn may prevent the use of emergency funds. Establishing trusted lines of communication gives us a clearer picture of how current funds are used, and provides opportunities to leverage existing resources. We also save public money when we are prepared for disasters rather than just reacting to them. A report by the Federal Emergency Management Agency states that [natural hazard mitigation saves \\$6 on average for every \\$1 spent on mitigation grants.](#)

That is why we support HB 2990, because it strengthens partnerships between community groups and local governments when preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters.

Each local community has unique circumstances and needs, and therefore need to be able to design their own right-sized plans.

We also support HB 2990 because it allows for right-sized resilience plans that correspond to the specific circumstances at hand. **Each local community is unique in the type of disasters it faces, its geographical location, what it needs, what it currently has, and who it is made up of.** Therefore, it is critical that communities design resilience hubs and networks that work for them, not a one-size-fits-all approach. HB 2990 empowers local communities and allows us to draw from their lived experiences through disasters.

Knowing that extreme weather and climate events will only increase in frequency and severity, we have a responsibility to act now and protect communities. We urge you to vote YES for HB 2990 and strengthen the connections necessary to make it easier for Oregonians the next time disaster strikes. Stronger communities can make the difference between surviving and thriving.