



**FEED'EM
FREEDOM
FOUNDATION**

TO: Joint Subcommittee On Capital Construction
FROM: Shantae Johnson, Executive Director, Feed 'em Freedom Foundation
RE: HB 5030
DATE: May 5, 2023

Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, and Members of the Committee

My name is Shantae Johnson, Executive Director of Feed 'em Freedom Foundation. We are Black-led small farm incubator that supports emerging Black farmers to grow and celebrate culturally-specific ancestral foods. Currently, 1 in 5 Black families in Oregon experience hunger, with 18% of Black families experiencing high food insecurity - a statistic that is three times higher than White, non hispanic families. Our programs build economic strength that flows from our community of food producers directly into the homes of families most in need.

Oregon's Regional Food Bank Network is requesting \$22M for one-time infrastructure investments into our regional food banks across the state. This request will help strengthen our statewide distribution network and support Oregonians facing hunger. A portion of these funds will be allocated to Feed 'em Freedom Foundation's Black Community Food Center to support fresh food distribution in the Portland metro area.

Feed 'em Freedom Foundation's Black Community Food Center will be critical infrastructure in the BIPOC food economy, activating solutions and connections that will lead to the growth of BIPOC-led farms and businesses. The Black Community Food Center will be a place where community-based organizations can host breastfeeding groups, garden education classes, and cooking classes; and provide access to a food pantry, commercial kitchen space, and greenhouse. The campus includes a community hub and kitchen, cold and dry food storage areas, a hydroponic freight farm, industrial greenhouse, and anaerobic digester. Funding for this project will support the land acquisition and construction costs.

We are mindful as we make this request that food banking alone is not a permanent solution to hunger. Hunger is not just an empty stomach or an individual experience. We are encouraged that the legislature is also taking action to address the reasons why so many people seek emergency food.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration. We urge you to support this important request.

Sincerely,

Shantae Johnson
Executive Director