

# OREGON HUNGER TASK FORCE

## Creating Policies for a Hunger-Free Oregon

To: House Committee On Emergency Management and Veterans

From: Chris Baker, Oregon Hunger Task Force

RE: Testimony in **Support of HB 4121 and HB 4044**

Date: February 5, 2026

Chair Tran, Vice Chairs Lewis and Watanabe, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Chris Baker, and I am the Administrator of the [Oregon Hunger Task Force](#). Created by the Legislature in 1989, the Oregon Hunger Task Force (OHTF) is a legislatively mandated advisory body that brings together lawmakers, state agencies, advocates, service providers, and people with lived experience of hunger. The Task Force serves as a statewide resource to research hunger, coordinate across systems, and recommend policy solutions to reduce food insecurity in Oregon.

On behalf of the Oregon Hunger Task Force (OHTF), I am writing to express strong **support for HB 4121 and HB 4044** and their focus on strengthening Oregon's Resilience Hubs and Networks framework. From a food security and emergency response perspective, this bill represents a critical opportunity to address long-standing gaps that were made unmistakably clear during the Governor's recent declaration of a food security emergency.

The Oregon Hunger Task Force holds a unique, system-level view of food access across Oregon. Last summer, at the request of the Governor's Office, the OHTF produced the [Oregon Food Assistance System Report](#) to assess how H.R.1 cuts would affect food access functions statewide. That research confirmed what communities have long known: Oregon's food assistance landscape is decentralized, fragmented, and unevenly resourced - far from resilient.

During the SNAP disruption and subsequent emergency declaration, these structural weaknesses became acutely visible. While the Oregon Food Bank network plays an essential and effective role in feeding communities across the state, it is only one part of a much broader ecosystem. Thousands of community food pantries, mutual aid groups, faith-based providers, and grassroots food hubs operate outside the formal food bank network. Most often, this is not by choice, but because these organizations lack the infrastructure required to meet federal food safety, storage, and reporting requirements tied to participation in large-scale distribution systems. As a result, entire communities, particularly in rural and remote areas, are left overburdened and underserved during periods of crisis.

The Task Force works closely with the Office of Resilience and Emergency Management (OREM), and I have had the opportunity to see this work in action firsthand. In November, I visited two Resilience Hubs, one in Portland's West Hills and one in Silverton. Each was uniquely tailored to its community's needs, reflecting deep local knowledge and trust. What stood out was not only their effectiveness, but their potential.

The Task Force mapping and survey work for the Food Assistance System Report identified a multitude of non-OREM affiliated community hubs across Oregon, particularly in rural areas and some beyond the reach of the

Oregon Food Bank network. These hubs are entirely community-operated and receive little to no state support. When local resources are exhausted, there is nowhere else for residents to turn. We witnessed this reality during the recent emergency, when demand surged and informal systems were stretched to their limits. With modest, sustained investments through Resilience Hub grants, such as refrigeration, generators, or storage capacity, many of these non-OREM community hubs could expand food access, better withstand disruptions, and in some cases, become eligible to connect with broader food distribution networks, or grow to become OREM affiliated Resilience Hubs, broadening the state's resilience network.

HB 4121 and HB 4044 create a pathway to address these gaps by strengthening and sustaining the Resilience Hubs and Networks Program. By establishing a clearer funding framework and making technical corrections to existing statute, this bill would allow Oregon to better support local infrastructure that can serve as food access points during emergencies and periods of instability. It also offers OREM greater efficiency and coordination in responding to future disruptions, whether driven by federal policy changes, economic shocks, or natural disasters.

The Oregon Hunger Task Force looks forward to continuing our close partnership with OREM to operationalize the gaps identified through our research and to build a food system that is resilient, equitable, and prepared. HB 4121 and HB 4044 are a meaningful step toward that goal, and we urge your support.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Chris Baker  
Administrator, Oregon Hunger Task Force  
Legislative Strategist, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon