



Partners *for a*  
Hunger-Free Oregon

*Ending hunger before it begins.*

To: House Human Services and Housing Committee  
From: Patti Whitney-Wise, Executive Director  
Re: HB 4042 - General Assistance program – **Support**  
Date: February 3, 2016

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### **Bring Back General Assistance, Bring Back Dignity**

Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon and the Oregon Hunger Task Force are concerned that adults with disabilities are being left behind. Oregonians with disabilities should have nutritious meals, safe housing, and adequate medical care.

Yet all too often, they struggle just to survive. It often takes between 1 – 3 years to receive federal disability benefits. In the meantime, their health conditions worsen and they often fall into poverty. Some die before getting help.

There are few things harder than transitioning to a life with a serious disability. We are at our best when we stand with one another in challenging times. General Assistance (GA) was once a crucial bridge between the time a major life disruption occurs and the time when a disability-based benefit is approved. It's time to re-instate GA in Oregon.

We support HB 4042, a bill that will provide a more adequate level of assistance to adults while they wait for federal disability payments to start.

Restoring the General Assistance Program Makes Sense:

- **Oregonians with disabilities are able to stabilize and get help applying for federal benefits.** This helps them and the communities in which they live.
- **Oregon gets reimbursed for its costs.** When Oregonians with disabilities are approved for federal SSI/SSDI benefits, the state gets reimbursed for most of the amount paid out for housing, utilities, and personal incidental funds provided by the state.

General Assistance is a wise investment and a good deal. Individuals with disabilities who fall into poverty or homelessness often end up in emergency rooms, jails, or shelters, and the cost of rehabilitation can be much higher. Federal disability benefits help cover the cost of housing and other necessities and infuse money into local economies.

We ask that you please pass HB 4042.