

# Affordable Housing NOW!

## Housing and Hunger in Oregon

**Oregon's high hunger rate is directly connected to the lack of affordable housing in communities throughout our state.**

Right now, many hard working Oregonians are forced to choose between paying rent and paying for groceries and other basic necessities. Seniors and people with disabilities who rely on fixed incomes are paying so much of their income towards rent that they can no longer afford to put food on the table. Addressing the housing needs of low wage workers and people on fixed incomes will help decrease food insecurity and hunger.

- The USDA defines "food insecurity" as being uncertain of one's ability to acquire enough food to meet basic needs of all household members because of insufficient money and other resources for food.
- The USDA defines "hunger" as when insufficient money and other resources diminish food intake and disrupt normal eating patterns, forcing an individual to go without food for an intermittent or an extended period of time.

**Oregon has one of the highest rates of hunger in the United States.**

- From 2004-2006, 4.4% of households in Oregon suffered from hunger and nearly 12% faced food insecurity, lacking sufficient income to purchase needed food. Despite the outstanding effort by Oregon Food Bank and other groups to reduce hunger and food insecurity in the last six years, Oregon still ranks 16th in the nation for hunger.<sup>i</sup>
- A 2006 Oregon study found 22% of respondent households with children reported their children had to skip meals or eat smaller meals; 35% of these households reported this happens every month.<sup>ii</sup>
- Enough Oregonians received emergency food from July 2006 to June 2007 to populate both Lane and Marion County combined (755,000 people)!<sup>iii</sup>
- Since 2004, more than 1 in 10 Oregonians experienced the difficulty of purchasing enough food for their families to eat during some time of the year.<sup>iv</sup>

**The lack of affordable housing is one of the most important reasons why Oregonians go hungry. <sup>v</sup>**

- Oregon's hunger is an income problem. It is not that the state lacks sufficient food in the supermarkets, but rather a large number of Oregonians do not have sufficient financial resources to purchase the food they need. With affordable housing difficult to find, housing costs eat up a large portion of the budget of low-income households, leaving low-income households struggling to purchase the food they need.
- High housing costs force many families to choose between paying rent or meeting other basic needs. In 2007, 82% of low-income rental households were living in housing more expensive than they can reasonably afford.<sup>vi</sup>
- A study of food bank users found 51% of respondents spent over half of their monthly income on housing and 25% spent over three-fourths of their income on housing.<sup>vii</sup> The Federal government defines housing as affordable when a household spends no more than 30% of its monthly income on housing.

- The percentage of respondent households that has been forced to move in the last two years due to the cost of housing has increased to 28%, and 10% are currently homeless.<sup>viii</sup>

**Oregon’s hunger crisis is the result of the increasing cost of living relative to wages. Low income Oregonians are spending more on housing costs, and incomes are not keeping up.<sup>ix</sup>**

- From the late 1970s to the late 1990s, the poverty rate for working families with children doubled from 7.3% to 15.2%. This was caused by the increased cost of living—especially housing costs--and the loss of living wage jobs.<sup>x</sup>
- Between 1988 and 2003, while Oregon’s economy boomed, housing values in Oregon rose 183% and the portion of renters paying more than 30% of their income for housing grew in every region in Oregon.<sup>xi</sup>
- In 2004, over 51% of Oregon renters paid unaffordable rents—more than one third of their income. More than a quarter of Oregonians had severely unaffordable housing—more than half of their income. These stark figures rank Oregon number two in the nation for unaffordable housing!<sup>xii</sup>
- For low-income renters, there simply is not enough money left over to purchase needed food. For many low-income people, food is seen as a more flexible expense than housing cost. “People who don’t have enough money to pay bills know they can skip a meal and get by until the next day. They may be tired at work and less active at home, but they’ll still have a roof over their heads,” says Michael Leachman of the Oregon Center for Public Policy.<sup>xiii</sup>
- The Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco found that Oregon has one of the most difficult rental housing markets in the country. Ranking us 49<sup>th</sup> in rental affordability.<sup>xiv</sup>

**How can I get more information or get involved to make a difference?**

**For more information, please contact Julie Massa at (503) 335-9884 or [Julie@cdnportland.org](mailto:Julie@cdnportland.org) or go to <http://www.cdnportland.org/ahn>**

<sup>i</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, November 2007, “Household Food Security in the United States, 2006,” Mark Nord, Margaret Anderson, and Steven Carlson.

<sup>ii</sup> Oregon Food Bank, October 2006, “Profiles of Poverty and Hunger in Oregon 2006,” Steve Randolph, p 5.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid, p 6.

<sup>iv</sup> USDA November 2007, “Household Food Security in the United States, 2006.”

<sup>v</sup> Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, April 2006, “Act to End Hunger,” p 1.

<sup>vi</sup> Children First for Oregon, October 2007, “Report Card 2007, The Status of Children in Oregon,” p 2.

<sup>vii</sup> Oregon Center for Public Policy, September 2006, “Who’s Getting Ahead? Opportunity in a Growing Economy,” Leachman, Michael, Janet Bauer, and Joy Margheim, p 85.

<sup>viii</sup> Oregon Food Bank, October 2006, “Profiles of Poverty and Hunger in Oregon 2006,” Steve Randolph, p 16.

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid, p 17

<sup>x</sup> Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, February 2001, “Hunger Headlines 2001,” p. 1.

<sup>xi</sup> Oregon Center for Public Policy, August 2006, News Release: Economic Growth Failing to Improve Incomes for Typical Households, Health Coverage, or Poverty,” Michael Leachman p. 1.

<sup>xii</sup> Oregon Center for Public Policy, September 2006, “Who’s Getting Ahead? Opportunity in a Growing Economy,” Leachman, Michael, Janet Bauer, and Joy Margheim, p 85.

<sup>xiii</sup> Oregon Center for Public Policy, October 2002, News Release: Oregon Rural Residents, Workers and Renters more likely to go Hungry Compared to Their Counterparts Nationally,” Michael Leachman p. 2.