



OREGON SENATE DEMOCRATS

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Vulnerable Oregonians Protected Through Emergency Funding Action

Senate Democrats prioritize immediate funding for childcare access, food assistance & more

SALEM – The Oregon Legislature’s Joint Emergency Board met this afternoon to approve agency funding requests to address many of Oregon’s most pressing challenges. In addition to sizable investments towards building immediate hospital and health care capacity, funding approved during today’s meeting will go towards critical initiatives in childcare, food assistance and statewide broadband deployment.

“Today’s funding actions reflect Senate Democrats’ values –standing up for vulnerable Oregonians facing immediate issues that simply cannot wait,” said Senate Majority Leader Rob Wagner (D-Lake Oswego), who serves as a member of the legislature’s Joint Emergency Board. “We’re supporting access to health care, childcare, groceries and vital infrastructure – these funds will provide rapid relief to meet critical needs in communities around Oregon.”

As part of the Emergency Board’s agenda, over \$35 million will go to address hospital staff and bed shortages. An additional \$9 million will support childcare or early learning centers co-located with affordable housing. These new resources build from a [report submitted](#) to the legislature by Oregon Housing and Community Services in February 2022. According to the report, Oregon will need 30,000 more childcare slots and 600,000 new housing units over the next two decades to meet increasing demand.

“Rising costs of housing and childcare are affecting Oregonians in my district and in every part of the state,” said Senator Kayse Jama (D-Portland), Chair of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development. “By funding this program, we’re taking steps to address severe childcare shortages and find solutions that will provide stability and relief for Oregonians in the years ahead.”

To address rising food costs, the Emergency Board made an additional \$5 million allocation to provide statewide emergency food assistance. Oregon Food Bank estimates that this \$5

million allocation will support the purchase of 5 million pounds of food needed to maintain adequate emergency food supplies until June 2023.

“Too many Oregon families are struggling to keep food on the table,” said Senator Kate Lieber (D-Beaverton), Co-Chair of the Joint Emergency Board Subcommittee on Human Services. “Today, we took action to provide the Oregon Food Bank with essential resources to keep vulnerable Oregonians fed.”

The legislature’s Joint Emergency Board authorized the Oregon Business Development Department’s to submit \$5.7 million in grant applications for federal funding to support statewide broadband deployment. The board also authorized the Department to establish eight full-time broadband positions, contingent on federal funding. According to a [2020 report](#) from the Oregon Broadband Advisory Council, over 200,000 Oregonians are either underserved, unserved or unconnected from broadband infrastructure.

“Broadband access is critical to the economic and general wellbeing of our rural communities, especially in districts like my own,” said Senator Jeff Golden (D-Ashland), who has represented areas of urban and rural Southern Oregon in the Legislature since 2019. “I’m thankful for today’s Emergency Board actions, which will pay dividends into our state, improving access to services that will sustain our rural communities.”

Additional information about today’s Emergency Board actions can be [found here](#).

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