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I grew up poor. As a kid, my family lived for a time without electricity and running water. My school clothes came from Goodwill and other second-hand shops. I wound up on my own at an early age and have known frighteningly lean times. I know what it means to be unable to pay a power bill until the threat of shut-off becomes imminent. I know what it feels like to have to choose between going to the doctor *or* having enough gas money to get back and forth to work in-between paychecks.

*But I never went hungry.* I certainly have never experienced the unimaginable heartbreak of watching my child suffer because she has too little food in her belly.



We all want our communities and the families who live in them to be strong and prosper. We know that these are difficult times and we need to step up our efforts to achieve this goal.

Oregon continues to have an unacceptably high hunger rate, especially for a state as agriculturally rich and productive as ours is. One in five children live in a food-insecure household, and more than half of our students live in families that earn so little that they qualify for free and reduced price meals at school.

These are our neighbors. When you drive past a schoolyard at recess, you're probably seeing kids who are not getting enough to eat. We can do better.

It is crucial that we help people in need right now, and we are fortunate to have tremendous commitment and leadership for this task. We also need to recognize that hunger is actually a symptom of a much deeper problem -- the problem of poverty. Governor Kitzhaber and I are working to develop strategies to reduce poverty and increase prosperity for all Oregonians.

The organizations listed below are on the front lines helping our neighbors in need. I urge you to consider supporting them. Or, if you need a bit of help yourself, these are the places to go.

We look forward to a day when every Oregonian has access to healthy, abundant food. We hope you will join us in this work!

[Oregon Prosperity Initiative](#)**How You Can Help**

- Go to the [Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon's Facebook](#) page and take the pledge to help end hunger!
- Read Oregon's [five-year plan to end hunger](#).
- Encourage your friends to join the effort.
- Attend the [Ending Hunger Before it Begins summit](#) on January 19 and 20, 2012, in Corvallis.
- [Get in touch with your legislators](#) to let them know you care about making sure everyone has enough to eat.
- Help with local food efforts, federal food program outreach, and statewide advocacy by getting in touch and involved with:

~ [Your local food bank or pantry](#)~ [Oregon Food Bank](#)~ [Maslow Project](#)~ [Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon](#)[First Lady's Initiatives home page](#)**Keep up with Governor Kitzhaber****Priorities**[Education: Establishing a zero-to-20 system](#)[Health Care: Delivering better health](#)[Jobs & Innovation: Creating family-wage jobs](#)**Business Oregon**[Grow your Oregon Business](#)[The Oregon Advantage](#)[More Business Support](#)**Governor's Office**[Boards and Commissions](#)[Diversity & Inclusion](#)[Economic & Business Equity \(MWESB\)](#)[Education & Workforce Policy](#)[Intergovernmental/Regional Solutions](#)[Natural Resources](#)

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