

# **Oregon Poverty Facts**

## **Community Action Directors of Oregon**

~ While the percentage of Oregonians living in poverty has declined slightly in recent years (from 12.4% in 1990 to 11.6% in 1997) the actual number of Oregonians living in poverty has grown due to increased population. The number is still too high and many Oregonians are "at risk" of falling back into poverty. The adoption of a Blue Ribbon Task Force on Poverty is desperately needed to fight the battle against poverty.

~ The lack of affordable housing is the number one barrier to rising above the poverty level. While medium family income has increased 90% over the past 15 years, the cost of housing has risen 140% during this same time period. The adoption of HJR 65 will put the state on track to address this problem.

~ Rising energy costs are a serious threat to the well being of low-income Oregonians. Given the high cost of housing, rising energy costs jeopardize the ability of low-income families to pay for basic necessities such as food, housing and health care. The institution of public purposes and utility bill paying assistance aspects of HB1149, the utility restructuring legislation, will help address this problem.

~ In spite of record employment levels, the percentage of working poor Oregonians has doubled since the late 1970s. Proposed cuts in various state programs will make it more difficult for those working Oregonians to rise above the poverty level. CADO is a sponsor of the Campaign for Fairness in the effort to restore proposed funding cuts in employment related child care, the JOBS program, Oregon Project Independence, and other programs that help people rise and stay above the poverty level. CADO also supports HB 2716, the Refundable Child Care Tax Credit--this credit would provide families with incomes below 250% of federal poverty level with up to 40% in child care tax credit.

~ Oregonians are going hungry in record numbers. In 1999, the USDA found Oregon to be the hungriest state in the country. CADO supports SB522, which provides funding to the Department of Human Services in order to develop and administer a statewide food stamp outreach campaign. We also support HB2718, which expands the Gleaning Tax Credit--farmers would receive tax credit for donations to food banks and food pantries under this bill.

## **Blue Ribbon Task Force on Poverty**

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### ***Oregon Statute 409.750 (Human Services; Juvenile Code; Corrections)***

***State goal to eliminate or alleviate poverty. The State of Oregon desires to assist and enable the poor to achieve maximum feasible economic self-sufficiency. It shall be a state goal to eliminate or alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in Oregon. The state shall assist community action agencies to stimulate a better focusing of all available local, state, federal and private resources upon the goal.***

The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Poverty will be a state-wide, broad-based commission on poverty. Members will include community representatives, community action, state agencies and legislators; in order to function with the high degree of responsibility and empowerment required to deal realistically with poverty in Oregon, there must be Executive involvement.

The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Poverty will function as the designated state commission on poverty and serve within government and the state as an advocate for low-income Oregonians. Further, the task force will participate in coordinating effective and efficient provision of services to low-income Oregonians so that services can and will be available to the largest number of citizens, throughout the state. The task force will also help ensure that information on available services is available to all citizens and that information about any new service and/or program is widely and quickly disseminated.

The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Poverty will have the authority to study programs and budgets of all public agencies and those private agencies willing to cooperate which direct their services at the alleviation or eradication of the causes and conditions of poverty in Oregon. After studies are completed, the task force will make recommendations to the Governor, Legislature and agencies involved. The task force will also make recommendation for developing a comprehensive plan for delivery of services to low-income Oregonians.

The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Poverty will conduct appropriate research to determine the scope of poverty in Oregon, availability of emergency services for vulnerable Oregonians, opportunities for public and private partnership in anti-poverty programs, identification of current population in need of services and not eligible for services, and the barriers to receiving services.

The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Poverty will prepare and distribute an annual report on the status of poverty in Oregon, successful efforts to alleviate poverty, and recommendations for moving forward in the fight against poverty in Oregon.