



Good afternoon Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and members of the committee,

For the record, I am Eleazar Gamez (Pronouns He/Him/El) and I am a first-generation DACAmented college student currently in my third year at Portland State University. I am here before you to ask for your support on Senate Bill 849.

As a first-generation student, I understand the struggle of basic needs insecurities firsthand. I have been the head of household for my younger brother and me for the past two years. We live in a low-income neighborhood in Hillsboro. I am also currently working three jobs to make ends meet month after month and make sure to pay my rent, utility bills, and personal expenses. I am currently 21 years of age, and balancing my school world and my responsibilities at home has been a bit difficult.

As of a couple of months ago, I was receiving benefits from *The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*, also known as SNAP, for my younger brother. And as I did the six-month check-in, I filled in something incorrectly which led to my termination of those benefits. If this program would currently be in place, it would have helped me with my six-month check-in and I could have prevented the benefits my brother was receiving from being terminated.

Furthermore, many college students struggle to keep a balance and good ranking in their academic life due to the hardships they are facing. This bill would allow for students who are facing hardships to meet with this hired individual and determine what assistance programs they are eligible to apply for. This assistance is long overdue and will improve the lives of college students across the state.

I urge you to vote in support of Senate Bill 849 because that state needs to commit to student success and I believe this is one crucial step in doing so.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Eleazar Gamez