

February 27, 2023

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson, and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services,

My name is Sammi Teo and I live in Senate District 21 in Portland. I am writing in **strong support of Senate Bill 610**, Food For All Oregonians (FFAO) which would ensure all of our neighbors, regardless of immigration status, have access to the food they need to keep them and their families healthy.

Everyone should have access to food, no matter where we were born. Food is essential to our health, freedom, and ability to thrive. Participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) makes **kids less likely to be in poor health, leads to improvement in math and reading for children, and increases health and economic outcomes as adults.**¹

Hunger was a crisis in our communities even before the pandemic, and the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 have fallen hardest on newly-arrived Oregonians. Immigrants, refugees and Compact of Free Association (COFA) community members, in particular, have long faced higher rates of hunger and poverty in Oregon. Just one example: Latine and Pacific Islander Oregonians experienced hunger at twice the rate of white Oregonians pre-pandemic² – and this gap has only widened as our communities continue to struggle with COVID's ongoing impact and the rising cost of living.

Reduce food insecurity in Oregon: There are thousands of Oregonians who meet the income threshold to qualify for SNAP, but are excluded solely based on immigration status. FFAO will create a state program that matches federal SNAP and makes food assistance available to Oregonians who are currently excluded due to immigration status.

Support Oregon's economy: SNAP has a powerful impact on creating jobs and providing economic support in every corner of Oregon. **Each dollar spent by a family on SNAP leads to a \$1.50 increase in economic activity.**³ FFAO will match SNAP and similarly help support Oregon's economy. Additionally, because FFAO is a state supplement, it will not reduce or have any impact on SNAP or SNAP recipients.

Ensure accessibility and understanding of the program: FFAO will also make applying for food assistance more welcoming. It ensures everyone is aware of this vital support through community navigation and outreach, improved language access, and more. It will build on successful, community-driven navigator models to ensure trust and community safety.

This benefits all Oregonians in rural, urban, and suburban communities alike – kids do better in school, our families' health and well-being improves, and our economy thrives through the support of local businesses. I urge you to invest in our communities and vote YES on SB 610. Thank you for your time.

— Sammi Teo, Portland resident

¹ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. September 2016. [SNAP Works for America's Children](#).

² Oregon State University School of Public Policy. January 2022. [Oregon's Food Insecurity Rates At The Arrival of COVID](#).

³ USDA. July 2019. [SNAP and the Economy: New Estimates of the SNAP Multiplier](#).