

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson, Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Centro Cultural of Washington County, I am writing to express **support for Senate Bill 610**, Food For All Oregonians 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.

Hunger was a crisis in our communities well 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: Latinx and Pacific Islander Oregonians experienced hunger at twice the rate of white Oregonians pre-pandemic – and this gap has only widened as our communities continue to struggle with COVID's ongoing impact and the rising cost of living.

At Centro Cultural we serve over 3,000 families a month and see firsthand how difficult it can be for our community members not to receive help with basic needs. Food for all should not be a privilege, but a right.

The Centro Mercado helps provide food to the community of Washington County which has a diverse population. It has given our community joy and comfort knowing they can come to our food pantry to put food on their table.

We also see the impact of inflation and the pandemic over the past few years and how it has created a bigger economic divide, making it ever more difficult to receive this basic right of food.

At Centro Cultural of Washington County, we know that when we all have access to food, we're all better off. SB 610 will allow kids to do better in school, our families' health and well-being improves, and our economy thrives through the support of local businesses. This will be true in every corner of Oregon—in rural, urban, and suburban communities alike. When all of our neighbors are getting the food that they need, all of Oregon thrives.

This is why we urge your yes vote on SB 610. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Everardo Lopez Pizano