

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

My name is Maria Garcia-Toche and I live in Hood River, Oregon and I am writing in **support of 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.

I work with individuals who are experiencing food and housing insecurity. Part of my duty is to support clients in navigating resources to help them in their time of distress. Unfortunately, undocumented residents have less access to resources and suffer more due to their status. One of the many resources they need help accessing is SNAP.

Hunger was a crisis in our communities 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-pandemic¹ – and this gap has only widened as our communities continue to struggle with COVID's ongoing impact and the rising cost of living.

Food for All Oregonians will create a state-funded program that eliminates exclusions to SNAP and make applying for assistance more welcoming. As a volunteer at an emergency food bank, I meet people from diverse backgrounds experiencing food insecurity. Many individuals need somewhere to get food for the two days of out week the food bank is closed. Expanding accessibility by allowing folks to access SNAP regardless of immigration status and improving language access is essential to build trust and support for all Oregon residents.

We know that when we all have access to food, we're all better off. Kids do better in school, our families' health and well-being improves, and our economy thrives through the support of local businesses. This is 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 I am urging your yes vote on SB 610. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Maria Garcia-Toche

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https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/oregon_food_insecurity_rates_at_arrival_of_covid_2018-2020.pdf