

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

My name is Cynthia Aguilar-Arizmendi, I live in Eugene, OR 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 was raised by a single immigrant mother. Because I, myself, am not a U.S. resident or citizen, I too did not qualify for our family to receive food stamps. The only person who was eligible for food stamps was my brother, who was born in the U.S. Looking back on my childhood now, I realize that we were food insecure. I am thankful for the Oregon Food Bank and food pantries across the state who helped make sure we had food on our table, but sometimes, it just wasn't enough. The \$200 my brother received for food stamps every month was also not enough. Canned food sometimes came expired, cereals stale, and I ate so many raisins in my childhood that I refuse to eat them as an adult. Everyone deserves to have access to fresh, nutritious food and families shouldn't have to pick between having food in their bellies or a roof over their heads.

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-pandemic<sup>1</sup> – 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. Food will be one last thing families have to worry about. Food For All Oregonians makes food assistance available to all Oregonians who are currently excluded due to immigration status. It will also provide families with funds that match federal SNAP food assistance benefits.

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,

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[https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/oregon\\_food\\_insecurity\\_rates\\_at\\_arrival\\_of\\_covid\\_2018-2020.pdf](https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/oregon_food_insecurity_rates_at_arrival_of_covid_2018-2020.pdf)

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,  
Cynthia