



February 27, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Human Services

From: Oregon Education Association

Re: Support for SB 610

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

The Oregon Education Association represents over 41,000 educators and education service professionals across the state, from pre-k to community colleges. Our members are classroom teachers, bus drivers, custodians, teacher assistants, nutrition specialists, school counselors, community college professionals and more.

On behalf of the OEA, 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.

We know that immigrant and refugee communities are part of our classrooms and our schools. We know that when students are hungry or otherwise do not have their basic needs met their ability to learn is impacted--- that is why SB 610 is so important. Students and Educators alike support this legislation because just as it shouldn't matter what your status is throughout your academic learning journey, we say the same for every student and family's ability to access food and food assistance programs.

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,

Michele Ruffin

Government Relations Consultant

Oregon Education Association