



American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

Senator Gelser Blouin, Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Senate Bill 609 - Support

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson, and members of the Committee,

My name is Victor Reyes, and I am the executive director of AAUP-OR. On behalf of the more than 6,300 members of the American Association of University Professors in Oregon, our collective bargaining chapters at the University of Oregon, Portland State University, Oregon State University, and Oregon Institute of Technology, and our faculty members across Oregon, I urge you to support SB 609.

Graduate employees serve a vital role in higher education, and it is not an overstatement to say that universities not only in Oregon but across the country would be incapable of functioning without their work. However, their value is not reflected in their compensation, and they are prohibited from taking other employment to supplement their income. In high cost-of-living cities like Portland, Corvallis, and Eugene, this means that many graduate employees and their families are at-risk of food insecurity.

This insecurity is compounded at present because graduate employee labor is not recognized for the purposes of qualifying for SNAP benefits. Therefore, SB 609 represents commonsense and long overdue reforms to a system that needlessly excludes our next generation of highly-educated and highly-skilled Oregonians. With access to these benefits, graduate employees can focus on their research and teaching without the fear that they or their dependents will be forced to go hungry.

No student should go hungry in the state of Oregon. No working parent should be denied access to benefits because of the nature of their work. You can help make these ideals a reality through your support of SB 609.

Thank you for your consideration,
Victor Reyes
Director, AAUP Oregon