



**Testimony of Ricardo Lujan Valerio, Director of Government Relations<sup>1</sup>  
In Support of SB 856 - SNAP Accessibility  
Senate Committee on Human Services  
February 27th, 2023**

Chair Gelser Blouin and Members of the Committee,

Western Oregon University is in support of SB 856, which seeks to establish a COFA Food Assistance Program to provide nutrition assistance to COFA citizens who would qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits but for their immigration status and who have incomes at or below federal poverty guidelines

**Western Oregon University students are about five times more food insecure than the average American.<sup>2</sup>** That is why our WOU Food Pantry has been a critical resource for our campus. The pantry received regular product and produce shipments from the Marion Polk Food Share and operates on a client-choice model which allows for low barrier participation for our community to benefit from the pantry. Our pantry team, led by volunteers and staff, also produces data reports that show the impact of food insecurity on campus. Since 2017, there have been over 6,700 visits to our pantry, nearly 17,100 times people received food, and 78,500 pounds of food distributed.

**SB 856 will increase the ability for Western Oregon University and student leaders to serve our community.** As part of Abby's House, Western Oregon University's student-led gender justice and equity center, the WOU Pantry provides many services that these initiatives address. The pantry team already provides assistance with applying for SNAP benefits and Money for Meals program. Our policy to serve all in need allows us to also serve a vast amount of food insecure community members. These additional resources would allow our student leaders and university staff to further our mission to end hunger at Western Oregon University and throughout our community.

**For these reasons, Western Oregon University urges you to support SB 856.** We thank all the community stakeholders for leading this initiative. Please feel free to contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns.

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<sup>2</sup> "Can you guess these Food Insecurity Statistics?" By Josh Salsbury, March 1, 2021, <https://wou.edu/foodpantry/statistics/>