

Submitter: Muzammil Afzal
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure: SB610

Yes on SB 610

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

My name is Muzammil Afzal and I live in SW Portland and I am writing/speaking 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 am the son of an immigrant family who has often been unable to access certain services due to uncertainty, ineligibility and inaccurate knowledge of how to navigate public processes. I know how being excluded from services can hold a family back and negatively impact their health, education and ability to work. Food should be a human right that everyone has access to, especially in one of the richest countries in the world. Please support this bill.

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 — 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. We need a program that is accessible for everyone regardless of immigration status, language or creed.

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,

Muzammil Afzal