

To the Oregon Legislature,

I am a non-traditional graduate student at the University of Oregon. Before attending graduate school, I worked as a bartender and used my savings to move across the country to start a new phase of my life. My contract with the university is for 19 hours a week. My monthly paycheck is \$1500. My rent is \$750, I pay over \$400 a month for heat, hot water, electricity, internet service and a phone bill. I pay for car insurance, gas, renter's insurance, and garbage removal. This leaves around \$300 a month for all other expenses, which even without the current rate of inflation is absolutely unsustainable.

Yet when I applied for SNAP benefits, I was denied. Twice. I was asked how my master's degree would translate into a career, one of Oregon's criteria for students who apply for SNAP. I personally know graduate students (and undergraduates) who skip meals because they cannot afford to buy groceries. The University of Oregon has a food pantry with dozens of students lined up every week for produce and dry goods.

Why are we denying students basic necessities? Graduate students cannot work a second job because we already work seven days a week teaching, researching, and attending class. We should be fully eligible for SNAP benefits with no extensive hoops to jump through, and no questions asked. We aren't privileged academics who want handouts, we are real people with real lives and families, and we deserve a chance to thrive.

Passage of SB 609 would greatly benefit the graduate student population of Oregon.

Thank you,

Lillian DeVane

AFT-GTFF Local #3544

University of Oregon