

Submitter: Mica Contreras

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services

Measure: SB610

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

For the record, my name is Mica Contreras, and I am the Director of the Linn Benton Health Equity Alliance. I write today to support Senate Bill 610, which would make food assistance available to all Oregonians regardless of immigration status. We believe everyone should have the opportunity to achieve their highest level of health, and no one should go hungry due to their immigration status or place of birth.

Food insecurity can lead to a lifetime of health complications. For example, a strong connection exists between hunger and chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure, according to the USDA. Additionally, the chronic stress that can accompany food insecurity can affect mental health and has been linked to depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. For example, a study by The American Academy of Pediatrics showed parents with school-aged children who face severe hunger are 56.2% more likely to have PTSD and 53.1% more likely to have severe depression.

SB 610 will create a state-funded program that eliminates exclusions to SNAP and expands benefits to immigrants, refugees, and the Compact of Free Association (COFA) community members. Increasing access to food will benefit all Oregonians and help create healthier individuals, families, and communities.

Sincerely,

Mica Contreras