

February 27, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Human Services  
From: **Isaura Peña, Innovation Law Lab**  
Re: Support for Food for All Oregonians SB 610

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

My name is Isa Peña. I am the Director of Strategy at Innovation Law Lab, an Oregon-based nonprofit fighting for immigrant and refugee justice, and a member of Oregon Worker Relief (OWR), a statewide coalition striving to solve the problem of exclusionary impacts faced by our immigrant and refugee communities in Oregon.

I am writing to express support for 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.

Hunger has been a crisis in our communities since well before the pandemic, and the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 have fallen especially hard on newly-arrived Oregonians. Through our work with the Oregon Worker Relief Fund and the various other funds administered by OWR, we have seen time and time again that food is one of the most important needs highlighted by our immigrant and refugee communities.

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<sup>1</sup> – and this gap

---

<sup>1</sup>

[https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/oregon\\_food\\_insecurity\\_rates\\_at\\_arrival\\_of\\_covid\\_2018-2020.pdf](https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/oregon_food_insecurity_rates_at_arrival_of_covid_2018-2020.pdf)

has only widened as our communities continue to struggle with the ongoing impacts of COVID and the rising cost of living.

Food is a human right and many Oregonians go hungry or worry about where the next meal will come from due to exclusion from eligibility for assistance programs, stigma, and misinformation associated with that exclusion. We must take bold steps now to address hunger in Oregon.

We know that when people have access to food, all of us as Oregonians will be better off. SB 610 will allow all of us to thrive regardless of our immigration status. This is why we urge you to support SB 610.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura L. Pena". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'L'.