



**Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs**

**Advocating for Equity and Diversity throughout Oregon**

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice Chair Robinson, and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services:

For the record, my name is Jackie Leung, Co-Chair with the Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OCAPIA). I am writing to express the commission's support of SB 609, SNAP Benefits for Graduate Students.

OCAPIA works for the implementation and establishment of economic, social, legal, and political equity for Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in the state of Oregon and to maintain a continuing assessment of issues and needs confronting Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in this state. OCAPIA has several statutory duties, all of which revolve around advocacy and equity

According to the Oregon Department of Human Services, students in higher education must work a minimum of twenty hours per week.<sup>1</sup> Graduate students often work as graduate research assistants or graduate teaching assistants and are required to work less than 20 hours a week of employment. However, these hours do not count toward Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility. In addition to their roles as Graduate Assistants, graduate students attend school full time and may juggle being a student parent or caregiver or forced to work a second job for the extra 20 hours to be considered eligible for SNAP. Many serve as the sole income earner for their households.

The majority of graduate student employees in the state of Oregon have formed labor unions to advocate and negotiate better working conditions. Common areas of concern are low pay, housing, and food insecurity. The approximately 4,200 graduate employees who are members of the American Federation of Teachers include graduate teaching and research assistants at the University of Oregon, Portland State University, and Oregon State University. Every employee is kept to less than 20 hours a week of employment, commonly being paid for 12 to 19 hours per week. Right now in the state of Oregon, these hours do not count towards SNAP eligibility.

**Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs**

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Expanding SNAP work requirements to include hours worked as a graduate assistant would directly benefit graduate students in Oregon. Passing SB 609 will help graduate students have access to SNAP so that they will not be hungry.

I urge members to support its passage.



Chair Jackie Leung,


Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs


#### Sources:

- [1] Oregon Department of Human Services, Assistance: Food Benefits. <https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/assistance/food-benefits/Pages/eligibility-apply.aspx>



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