

Submitter: Mary Zodrow
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

Northwest Family Services (NWFS) is a culturally responsive, multi-service, 501c3 non-profit agency which serves Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington, Marion, and Polk Counties metropolitan and rural areas. NWFS works almost exclusively on behalf of individuals and families who endure significant cultural and socio-economic disparities, often living at 100-300% of Federal Poverty Levels; and, with many of those identifying as Latinx/Hispanic. NWFS supports the passage of SB 610 Food For All Oregonians because we operate on the premise that individuals' most basic needs must be met before they are able to address higher level needs; to be all that they can be.

However, NWFS knows all too well from years of experience serving diverse populations, especially those who face issues of place of birth, immigration status, or documentation issues, that poverty adversely disrupts the acquisition and sustainability of basic human needs like safe and affordable housing, healthcare access, and sufficient healthy foods; and, that poverty and food insecurity are acutely related.

Among the various social determinants of health, food insecurity has one of the most extensive adverse impacts on the overall health and well-being of individuals and families. Adults and children who are food insecure may be disproportionately affected by diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity; and, often times lack healthcare to address those health needs. NWFS supports passage of the Food for All Oregonians Program, within Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, as a way to address nutrition assistance to all Oregonians without regard for immigration status. It is the right thing to do for all those who all who reside in Oregon and for so many who remain, even throughout the COVID pandemic, the backbone of many industries and our basic social structure.