

Yes, on Oregon SB 610

My name is Christopher Plummer, a Malheur County Taxpayer, and media consultant, and I personally support Senate Bill 610, Food for All Oregonians. Not only is it imperative to provide food assistance to all Oregonians with prices soaring due to unchecked inflation, its a cost savings to Oregonians to feed everyone in our State.

School children perform better on tests and make classrooms more effective learning environments when all students are fed. Malnourished kids face health and learning impairments and have behaviors that require additional staff and disruptions to the classroom. Our farm workers are often without adequate sustenance between crop seasons leading to an unhealthy work force and production shutdowns. Several families have mixed status children due to immigration wait times and paperwork mistakes and must spread limited benefits between all their kids, even those uncovered by benefits. Hunger leads to compromises in health including but not limited to obesity from poor quality foods, starvation, improper growth hormone levels, compromised immunity to disease, higher diabetes rates, and catastrophic health emergencies that lead to ER visits, doctor and hospital bills paid for by taxpayers, and production losses to the supply chain, which hurts private business. All these things cost Oregon taxpayers millions of dollars each year.

Feeding Oregonians is the most morally pure and humane way to help keep costs down in education, health care and social services.

The Senate Bill also helps refugee families that are ineligible for SNAP benefits. Recently on a trip to Salem I met a young man from Afghanistan, who has refugee status, and he needed help temporarily. He now works for a non-profit and owns a business that contributes to our tax base. Many refugees are here because they helped our armed forces survive in inhospitable and unsafe environments making it impossible for them to go home. The very least we can do is make sure they get a running chance at the American Dream. Other refugees have escaped horrific conditions in their home countries, and the Christian thing to do is make sure they have a chance to eat.

I spent a large chunk of time in India on business and fell in love with the food. Buying ingredients used in India like saffron, ghee, tikka marsala, pistachio is incredibly expensive in rural places. Now imagine yourselves living abroad without pancakes, apple pie, beef, biscuits and gravy because you are priced out of the ingredients and none of the local food pantries carried those items.

I can tell you from personal experience that being hungry hurts and causes damage to self-esteem. Doing my best to exit a private corporation to move home from Chicago to Ontario, I gave a months' notice to my employer. Instead, they accepted my resignation immediately leaving me for over a month without food.. I remember walking to a food pantry in Uptown, and I couldn't carry the groceries very well in the January sub-zero temperatures. I ended up passing out on the street from the cold. My roommate came looking for me, and that is the only reason I survived. I also attended Lindbergh Elementary School in Ontario, Oregon in one of the first integrated schools that had once been migrant only. I watched my friends at school try to make it through each day hungry, and later one of those classmates, a dear friend, had to choose between insulin and food. It led to her early death, and it was a huge loss to her family and community.

For the above reasons; humanity, cost to taxpayers, and cost to the supply chain, I ask you to please support SB 610.