

Submitter: Efren Garza
On Behalf Of: SB610
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

Chairs Steiner and Sanchez; Vice Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith; Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Efren A. Garza, and I live in Ontario. I am writing to support 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.

As a young child, a descendant of Latino migrant workers, I experienced not having enough food to sustain a family of four children and two working adults. As an adult, I believe no child or adult should have to live through this experience. I fully support Senate Bill 610 as this Bill would ensure that all persons, regardless of national origin, can access the fundamental human right of nutrition.

Hunger was a crisis in our communities before the pandemic, and the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 have fallen hardest on newly arrived Oregonians. Immigrants, refugees, and Compact of Free Association (COFA) community members. They have long faced higher rates of hunger and poverty in Oregon. One example: Latinx and Pacific Islander Oregonians experienced hunger at twice the rate of white Oregonians pre-pandemic. This gap has only widened as our communities struggle with COVID-19's ongoing impact and the rising cost of living.

Food for All Oregonians will create a state-funded program that eliminates SNAP exclusions and makes applying for assistance more Inclusive.

- Food For All Oregonians will make food assistance available to all Oregonians currently excluded due to immigration status.
- It provides families with money for groceries that matches federal SNAP food assistance benefits.
- SB 610 will ensure all persons know the vital support available through community navigation and outreach with improved language access.
- This Bill will ensure a successful community-driven navigator model to strengthen and ensure trust and provide community safety to those most in need.

We know that when we all have access to food, we're all better off. Kids do better in school, our family's health and well-being improve, and our economy thrives through the support of local businesses. This is true in every corner of Oregon—rural, urban, and suburban communities. When all our neighbors are getting the food they need,

Oregon thrives.

This is why I am urging your yes vote on SB 610. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

The Most Reverend Efrén A. Garza