

Submitter: Timothy Herrera  
On Behalf Of: Food for All Oregonians  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

Dear Committee,

My name is Timothy Herrera, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Oregon, and I am writing in support of Food for all Oregonians. Food insecurity can be defined as “when people lack secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life. It may be caused by unavailability of food, insufficient purchasing power, inappropriate distribution (FAO 2021: 199). Food insecurity among “Latino/Hispanic” communities from 2015 to 2019 in Oregon was 8.3%, while 21% were experiencing “very low food security” (Edwards 2020; Oregon Health Authority 2019: 2). Daily challenges of food insecurity can interfere with the ability of people to provide care, and research has shown that food insecurity can have profound effects on people’s subjectivities and overall health status (Hales et al. 2020: 2; Tappia, Ramjiawan, and Dhalla 2020: v; Moreno et al. 2015; Munger et al. 2014). In 2021, food insecurity only got worse as food prices rose to the highest in decades (everything from vegetables, fruits, meats, dairy, and eggs) due to ongoing supply chain issues from the pandemic, not valuing worker safety, and a weakening economy that caused inflation to rise to the highest since 1982. During the pandemic, many farmworkers in Oregon relied on the support of food aid to make ends meet and not face hunger. According to the COVID Oregon Farmworker Study (COFS) which I was a researcher part of coalition of 13 community based organizations and 3 university, we found that During Phase 1 of COFS it was reported that most respondents had difficulties paying for basic expenses: 59% for food, 60% for rent; 59% for gas and electricity, 28% for water, and 16% for childcare costs (Martinez et. al. 2021: 16). By analyzing the responses of Indigenous farmworkers, it was revealed they faced economic challenges at higher rates; 71% had difficulty paying rent, 69% for food, and 68% for gas and electricity (Martinez et. al. 2021: 16).

It is policy failure that in Oregon, an agricultural center, that farmworkers who provide the food that Oregonians and other parts of the nation, do not have access to food security. Many are excluded from SNAP and receive low wages, so the State of Oregon needs to step up and support these communities. In addition there are community members and their families from all racial and ethnic backgrounds that will benefit from Food for All Oregonians. So please support Food for All Oregonians to take care all off people within the state, and support a future where food insecurity is a thing of the past. Thank you.