

Submitter: Levi Herrera-Lopez
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB452

My name is Levi Herrera-Lopez. I am a resident of Salem, Oregon, and executive director for the Mano a Mano Family Center. I write today to you in support of SB 452, which would appropriate general fund resources for distribution to Marion-Polk Food Share, Inc.

Food insecurity is one of the main challenges facing Oregonian families in Marion and Polk Counties. This is a challenge that, particularly in the years since the COVID-19 pandemic, impacts all types of families. For some, this is a chronic issue (such as for our unsheltered and disconnected neighbors), but thousands of working Oregonians are also dealing with food insecurity due to dwindling incomes and high prices. We are particularly saddened with the high numbers of agricultural workers throughout Marion and Polk that, despite being fully employed in food production, still face food insecurity themselves.

The increased ability of Marion-Polk Food Share to collect and distribute food assistance would benefit the entire community, in particular those served by Mano a Mano Family Center, so we strongly support SB 452.

Mano a Mano Family Center is the oldest Latino and Immigrant-led community-based organization in Salem-Keizer. Since our establishment in 1988, food insecurity has been the main issue that has driven our work. We have developed a great partnership with the Marion-Polk Food Share and know them as an honest, values-driven, and effective community partner. Mano a Mano Family Center has been a food distribution partner with the Marion-Polk Food Share for three decades. We currently operate four neighborhood-based sites -- 3 in Salem and 1 in Independence. Two of those sites feature community food pantries where clients can pick up food, through our partnership with Marion-Polk Food Share. Annually more than 4,000 families receive food boxes, in addition to systems and resource navigation, education, parenting education, positive youth development and positive social connections.

I thank you for consideration and support to address food insecurity in Marion and Polk counties.