



February 22, 2023

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson, Members of the Committee:

On behalf of High Desert Food and Farm Alliance (HDFFA), I am writing to express **support for 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.

Hunger was a crisis in our communities well before the pandemic, and the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 have fallen particularly hard on newly-arrived Oregonians. Immigrants, refugees and Compact of Free Association (COFA) community members, in particular, have long faced higher rates of hunger and poverty in Oregon. Just one example: Latinx and Pacific Islander Oregonians experienced hunger at twice the rate of white Oregonians pre-pandemic¹ – and this gap has only widened as our communities grapple with COVID's ongoing impact and the rising cost of living.

Our organization's mission is to support a healthy and thriving food and farm network in Central Oregon through education, collaboration, and inclusion. We believe that *everyone* deserves good food that is affordable, nutritious and culturally preferred. Currently, not all Oregonians have the same access to this food through supplemental benefits such as SNAP. Exclusion to these resources based on criteria like immigration status inhibits families and individuals from accessing crucial nutrition, investing in the local economy, and strengthening community health.

At HDFFA, we know that when we all have access to food, we're all better off. SB 610 will allow kids to do better in school, our families' health and well-being improves, and our economy thrives through the support of local businesses. This will be true in every corner of Oregon—in rural, urban, and suburban communities alike. When all of our neighbors are getting the food that they need, all of Oregon thrives.

HDFFA urges you to vote yes on SB 610. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "LouiseAKShirley".

Louise Shirley
Program Director, High Desert Food and Farm Alliance

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https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/oregon_food_insecurity_rates_at_arrival_of_covid_2018-2020.pdf