

Submitter: Emily Heilbrun

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services

Measure: SB610

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

My name is Emily Heilbrun. I live in Eugene. I am writing in support of 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.

I am fortunate enough not to need SNAP benefits but I have friends who do. One is a person who came to our community as an asylum seeker and could not get SNAP when she arrived due to her immigration status. She had to depend on food banks and community members who offered help. Fortunately, she has since been granted asylum and, in fact, now has her green card. She became gainfully employed and no longer needs SNAP, but Food for All Oregonians could have provided her crucial support when she first arrived. She is now a contributing, tax-paying, member of our community.

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, 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-pandemic — and this gap has only widened as our communities continue to struggle with COVID's ongoing impact and the rising cost of living.

Food for All Oregonians will create a state-funded program that eliminates exclusions to SNAP and makes applying for assistance more welcoming. Food for All Oregonians will make food assistance available to Oregonians who are now excluded due to immigration status. It will provide families with money for groceries that matches federal SNAP food assistance benefits. No one should go hungry in Oregon!

We know that when we all have access to food, we're all better off. Kids do better in school, our families' health and well-being improves, and our economy thrives through the support of local businesses. This is 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.

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

Sincerely,

Emily Heilbrun