



Date: February 27th, 2023
To: Senate Committee on Human Services
From: Jennifer Parrish Taylor, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy for the Urban League of Portland
Re: Support for Food for All Oregonians, SB 610

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 610. My name is Jennifer Parrish Taylor, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Urban League of Portland. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life across Oregon and SW Washington.

In the Coalition of Communities of Color's report, "Addressing the Racial Wealth Gap," the racial wealth gap describes the extreme economic inequality between white populations and communities of color. It explains the impact of four centuries of U.S. institutional and systemic racism that has led to the persistent disparities plaguing communities of color." Further in the report it illustrates that a misconception that the public and policy makers have are that "the material conditions for Black, Indigenous, and Latine communities have significantly improved since the passing of historic civil rights legislation in the late 1960s. This misconception erases the tremendous impact that legacies of discriminatory policies and laws have had and continue to have on the generational accumulation of wealth. Black, Indigenous, and Latine communities have been affected by institutional stripping of wealth due to the legacies of slavery, land theft, broken treaties, and other racist policies." The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is an example of such legislation.

In the Urban League of Portland's, "State of Black Oregon, 2015" we outline the importance of setting a food and nutrition goals for women of "reproductive age and children in Black communities; that there are real and impactful links between the environmental factors we are exposed to and very early development of chronic diseases, such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes and some cancers. This research further links some of the same factors to a range of problems related to brain development, school success and mental health. Nutrition, in the form of public assistance programs are a critical anti-poverty strategy for protecting child and maternal outcomes and at potentially reducing this deadly health outcomes; additionally, reducing the economic and financial stress on a Black mother through job programs and financial support significantly improves her health and that of her children."¹

We know that Oregonians continue to face hunger and issues of food insecurity with the 10.3% of Oregonians experiencing food insecurity tracking at pace of the national

¹ <https://ulpdx.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/State-Of-Black-Oregon-2015.pdf>, pg. 16.



percentage of 10.4.² For families that are food insecure, these “households were uncertain of having, or unable to acquire, enough food to meet the needs of all their members because they had insufficient money or other resources for food. Food-insecure households include those with *low food security* and *very low food security*.”³ Not only are Oregonians not getting adequate nutrition, but many do not have access to nutritious foods as they live in what is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a food desert, where the area “tend to have smaller populations, higher rates of abandoned or vacant homes, and residents who have lower levels of education, lower incomes, and higher unemployment.”⁴ Current food assistance policies continue to exclude tens of thousands of Oregonians from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (sometimes called “SNAP” or “food stamps”) and other vital supports for our families; people who are excluded include Oregonians who are essential to sustaining food production, childcare, healthcare institutions, education, transportation, and other critical services throughout the state.

Six states have successfully implemented state-funded programs that improve eligibility for SNAP. Modeled after these programs and built with the expertise of Oregonians with lived experiences of hunger and our immigration system, Food for All Oregonians will create a state-funded program that eliminates exclusions to SNAP, build on successful, community-driven navigator models to ensure trust and community safety, and make applying for assistance more welcoming and culturally responsive. If we choose to do nothing, tens of thousands of Oregonians will continue to be excluded from supports that are vital to their success and their health; every Oregon family deserves that chance. We urge you to pass Senate Bill 610 that will ensure that our communities continue to receive the support they need to thrive.

Respectfully,

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² <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/interactive-charts-and-highlights/>.

³ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/interactive-charts-and-highlights/>.

⁴ https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/45014/30940_err140.pdf, Pg. 1.