



310 NW Glisan St
Portland, OR 97209
info@blanchethouse.org
503 241 4340

February 27, 2023

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

On behalf of Blanchet House of Hospitality, 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 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.

For 71 years, Blanchet House has served free hot prepared meals to food insecure persons in the Old Town District of Portland, Oregon. We serve anyone crossing our threshold in need of a meal and a kind, welcoming community in which to enjoy this meal. Many people we serve live in low-income housing or other shelters that do not provide meals. They may be unable to prepare hot meals for themselves due to their age, disability, or lack of a proper kitchen. Many come to us because their benefits do not provide what we do or they do not have benefits at all. SB 610 will eliminate critical caps in our food benefit programs, benefiting people we serve every day.

At Blanchet House, 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.

This is why we urge your yes vote on SB 610. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Scott Kerman

Scott Kerman
Executive Director