



**Testimony in Support of SB 610
Marisol De La Torre, Unite Oregon
February 27, 2023**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 610. My name is Marisol De La Torre and I am a Policy Coordinator at Unite Oregon. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of our 46,000 members statewide.

As an organization that prioritizes immigrants, refugees, and people experiencing poverty, we know that food insecurity is a big issue among our community members. Last year, we launched our first community garden in East Portland. The 20,000-square-foot community garden is co-owned by our members and promotes food sovereignty, retains indigenous sustainability practices, and provides opportunities for immigrants and refugees to grow food.

Studies show that immigrants from low and middle-income countries moving to high-income countries experience abrupt change from their traditional food environment to an industrialized and processed one.¹ As a result, they are more likely to develop chronic illnesses such as type 2 diabetes and other metabolic diseases.

When we asked our membership why SB 610 was important to them, many stated that while they were thankful for food banks and food pantries across the state, it just wasn't enough. Food assistance programs are much more successful in combating hunger. Additionally, food banks and pantries often provide foods that many of our community members are unfamiliar with. Food For All Oregonians will allow individuals the autonomy to select the foods they eat and buy, ultimately constructing a sense of dignity.

Access to nutritious and culturally familiar food is an essential need for our community members. It is deeply upsetting that the same people from our community experiencing hunger are overrepresented in the food production industry and keep Oregonians fed.

Food for All Oregonians will create a state-funded program that eliminates exclusions to SNAP and make applying for food assistance safe and welcoming. Unite Oregon asks you to support our membership by voting yes to move SB 610 out of committee.

¹ Terragni L, Garnweidner LM, Pettersen KS et al. (2014) Migration as a turning point in food habits: the early phase of dietary acculturation among women from South Asian, African, and Middle Eastern countries living in Norway. *Ecol Food Nutr* 53, 273–291.



Thank you,

Marisol

Policy Coordinator, Unite Oregon