



Date: 2/27/2023

To: Senate Committee on Human Services

From: Adelante Mujeres

RE: Support SB 610

My name is Petrona, and I am the Leadership and Advocacy Program Coordinator at Adelante Mujeres, which means “Women Rise Up”. Adelante Mujeres is a non-profit organization in Forest Grove. The agency has a rich history of successfully engaging low-income Latine and immigrant communities by acting as a forum for community advocacy. Adelante Mujeres’ mission is to provide holistic education and empowerment opportunities to low-income Latina women and their families to ensure full participation and active leadership in the community. Our organization served over 15,000 individuals in 2022 with comprehensive and life-changing services—these services span from Educational, Microenterprise, Health Equity and Leadership programs.

On behalf of Adelante Mujeres, 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, asylum seekers, 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.

Over the last two years, Adelante Mujeres has been participating on the steering committee of this important bill. Through this experience, we also participated in conducting listening sessions with Latina women and their families to further identify the barriers they face when accessing food. In our findings, one of the most pressing themes that arose was the experiences of families feeling left out of nutritious food. They felt like the food they were receiving at food banks or pantries were food items that stores could not sell or were already expiring. Making them feel like they were not valued or seen as community members. Secondly, it was identified that accessing services was intimidating. There was a lot of fear about how it could impact their adjustment of status in the United States. As well as a lack of additional and crucial services like language access for non-English speakers. Lastly, and quite frankly, one of the hardest things to

share here with you all is the irony of how many of us go about our days knowing we have meals. Meanwhile, to this day there are farmworkers who shared with us that they must sometimes limit how much food they buy because they do not have enough money. Which puts them in a difficult situation because the cost of food for something like strawberries is beyond their budget, even though they just picked them at their job. We stand with these families and hope that today this gives you more perspective as to why it is crucial that we pass Food for All Oregonians.

At Adelante Mujeres, 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the letter 'P' with a flourish.

Petrona Dominguez Francisco
Leadership & Advocacy Program Coordinator, Adelante Mujeres
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