

Date: 2/27/2023

To: Senate Committee on Human Services

RE: Support SB (Senate Bill) 610

Dear Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson, and members of the Committee,

My name is Maria Dolores and I live in Washington County, and I am writing in favor of Senate Bill 610, Food for All Oregonians, which would ensure that all our neighbors, regardless of their immigration status, have access to the food they need to keep themselves and their families healthy.

As a mother of three children and a family of five, it was difficult to raise and educate my children without letting them go hungry. I still have in my mind a day when I went out to work and left some cheese and tortillas for my children to eat and the youngest of them when I asked him if he had already eaten he answered me in an ironic way... Yes mom, I already ate some *RIQUISIMOUS TORTOTAS DE AIRE*, because they had not had enough that day for all three of them. At the time I softened the situation with a smile, but, when I turned around, I could not avoid my tears. Those were exceedingly difficult days, feeling the arrival of celebration dates like... Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner and feeling the anguish of not being able to offer them a rich and nutritious dinner. It is extremely hard for me to remember and think of these families who are now living in situations like the one my family and I went through.

Hunger was already a crisis in our communities before the pandemic and the health and economic effects of COVID-19 have further affected newly arrived Oregonians. In particular, members of the immigrant, refugee and Compact of Free Association (COFA) community have long faced higher rates of hunger and poverty in Oregon. Here's just one example: Latino and Pacific Islander Oregonians experienced hunger twice as often as white Oregonians prior to the pandemic, and this gap has only increased as our communities continue to struggle due to the ongoing impact of COVID and the rising cost of living.

- Food For All Oregonians will create a state-funded program that eliminates SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) exclusions and makes it more accessible to apply for assistance.
- Food For All Oregonians makes food assistance available to all Oregonians who are currently excluded due to immigration status.
- Develop successful community-led mentoring models to ensure community trust and safety.

We know that when we all have access to food, we all do better. Children do better in school, the health and well-being of our families improves, and our economy thrives through the support of local businesses. This is true in every corner of Oregon, whether rural, urban, or suburban. When all our neighbors are getting the food they need, all of Oregon thrives.

This is why I urge you to vote in favor of SB 610. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Maria Dolores