

2/28/23

Yes on SB 610- Food For All Oregonians

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

My name is Mason Durfee and I live in Portland, Oregon. I am writing to you today to ask for your support for Senate Bill 610 Food for All Oregonians, because food is essential for everyone. This bill ensures that all of our neighbors, regardless of immigration status, have access to the food they need to keep them and their families healthy. I support this bill because I believe that food is a human right and when all of our neighbors are getting the food that they need, all of Oregon thrives.

During the height of the COVID19 pandemic I was laid off from work suddenly due to the impacts of the emergency. When faced with the challenge of food insecurity, I did not have to think twice about whether or not I might not be eligible for food assistance based on my citizenship status. The support of the SNAP program - support that is meant to be a critical safety net for everyone in our community - was something I could learn about and access readily. Ultimately, SNAP supported my family to overcome the challenge of food insecurity and maintain our health, wellbeing, and economic security during a difficult time. I support SB 610 because I believe that everyone should have the ability to access the support that they need regardless of their status or identity.

But, food assistance policies continue to leave about 62,000 immigrant, refugee, and COFA community members in Oregon behind, who would otherwise be eligible for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (also known as SNAP or food stamps) if not for immigration status. Further, immigrants and refugees make up the majority of the labor force on farms and in food processing plants across America, yet are largely excluded from accessing the food they work to produce.

Food for All Oregonians will address this gap by creating a state-funded program that eliminates exclusions to SNAP while also making applying for assistance more welcoming and culturally responsive. SB 610 will provide families with money for groceries that match federal SNAP food assistance benefits and will build on successful, community-driven navigator models to ensure trust and community safety.

No one should be excluded from accessing food or the means to provide for themselves and their families.

This is why I am urging your yes vote on SB 610. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Mason Durfee