

MAXINE E. DEXTER, MD
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 33



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services

Date: February 27, 2023

Subject: Support SB 610

Chair Gelser Blouin and Vice Chair Robinson:

For the record, my name is Dr. Maxine Dexter and I am honored to be the State Representative for House District 33, which includes NW & Downtown Portland, Linnton, and Cathedral Park. I am grateful for this opportunity today to share my support for SB 610, which will establish the Food for All Oregonians Program within the supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, providing nutrition assistance to Oregonians regardless of their immigration status.

A common point of discussion you may have heard from me and my office this session is the reference to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. A staple of psychology, Abraham Maslow laid out a system for understanding human needs in a way that builds toward each person's ability to lead a fulfilling and successful life. At the foundation of this hierarchy is the requirement that basic physiological needs must be met for any other opportunity to be available to a person. This means each of us must have access to clean air, clean water, clothing, shelter, and pertinent to our discussion today, *food*.

I firmly believe that the enormous investments our state makes in healthcare, education, transportation and beyond is largely wasted when there are significant numbers of Oregonians struggling to simply have safe and reliable access to food and shelter.

We know that persistent hunger experienced during childhood is a predictive marker for students dropping out of high school and can lead to stifled cognitive and emotional development^{1 2}. Hunger is also linked to increased risk of depression, suicidal ideation, and chronic health conditions, such as COPD and asthma³. As a pulmonary and critical care

¹ <https://academic.oup.com/pch/article/23/5/e77/4772971>

² https://www.childrehealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/toohungrytolearn_report.pdf

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4373582/>

physician during my “day job,” it is my hope that we can eliminate these unnecessary risks for Oregonians.

SB 610 affirms Oregon’s commitment to caring for *all* Oregonians and ensures we are supporting and empowering our communities to live fulfilling lives regardless of their sex, race, sexual orientation, gender, educational background, or immigration status.

I am grateful to Senators Campos, Manning Jr, and Gorsek and Representatives Ruiz, Bowman, and Gamba for their leadership and partnership on this bill. I urge you all to understand the importance of taking action to address the most basic needs of *all* Oregonians. This is just one step in addressing the food insecurity crisis that so many in our communities are facing, and I believe it will be an impactful one. I strongly urge your support for SB 610.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maxine Dexter', with a stylized, cursive script.

Representative Maxine Dexter, M.D.

House District 33 (NW & Downtown Portland, Linnton, & Cathedral Park)