
February 24, 2023

Senator Sara Gelser Blouin, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health, and Recovery
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of SB610

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

We are writing to express support for Senate Bill 610, which would establish the Food for All Oregonians Program to provide nutrition assistance to residents of this state who would qualify for federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) but for immigration status.

Hunger was a crisis in Multnomah County before the pandemic, and the health and economic disparity has fallen hard on newly-arrived Oregonians. Immigrants, refugees and Compact of Free Association (COFA) community members, in particular, have long faced higher rates of hunger and poverty in Oregon. As an example: Latinx and Pacific Islander Oregonians experienced hunger at twice the rate of white Oregonians pre-pandemic¹ — and this gap has only widened with COVID's ongoing impact and the rising cost of food and housing.

SB 610 would utilize smart state public policy to counteract the inequitable impact of current federal SNAP exclusions based on immigration status. Multnomah County invests in several strategies to increase food security for our community members, including school-based food pantries, WIC and senior nutrition assistance programs, which are available regardless of immigration status. This has been critical to their successful impact.

Multnomah County also plays a role in SNAP outreach through Bienestar de la Familia and SNAP eligibility determinations through our Aging, Disability, and Veterans Services. As a result, our staff sees first-hand the current limitations within the federal SNAP program to equitably serve newly-arrived community members.

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https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/oregon_food_insecurity_rates_at_arrival_of_covid_2018-2020.pdf

The views of community partners and members of the impacted communities were centered in designing this policy and we believe the holistic approach will be effective at equitably increasing access to nutrition assistance. We support the four-pronged approach in SB610 to:

- Create a state-funded program that makes food assistance available to Oregonians who are currently excluded from SNAP due to immigration status.
- Provide funding to organizations and community-based groups to deliver culturally specific and targeted outreach, application assistance and navigation.
- Integrate application process with Healthier Oregon so that community members can apply with a navigator for both health care and food assistance at the same time.
- Convene an advisory group to evaluate ODHS in treating all applicants for and recipients of public assistance “in a welcoming manner and with respect, courtesy, fairness and dignity.”

We at Multnomah County support SB 610 and ask that you take this critical step to address hunger across the state and ensure our community has equitable access to the food needed to thrive .

Thank you,

Mohammad Bader, MS,LPC

Director

Department of County Human Services