

February 28, 2023

Subject: SB 610 - I SAY YES

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice Chair Robinson, Members of the Committee.

My name is Macdonald Akuti and I live in Rockaway Beach, Tillamook County, Oregon, and I am writing in support of Senate Bill 610, Food For All Oregonians which would ensure all our neighbors, regardless of their immigration status, have access to food they need to keep and their families healthy.

Hunger was a crisis in our communities before the pandemic, and the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 have 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. 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-19's ongoing impact and the rising cost of living.

I minister in a local Church here where there's a senior meal on the wheels, meanwhile during the countrywide total COVID-19 lockdown, I witnessed a local City Lions Club members mobilizing and delivering fresh food, and fruits to families with school going children who used to get food from their school lunch program, but were unable due school closures. With the Senate Bill 610, Food For All Oregonians, The Oregon Food Bank and Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon will be able to broaden the scope of their food services to assist the members of our communities who are food insecure, and I see the need every day. We have complete faith that the Senate Bill 610 will ensure everyone is aware of this vital support through community navigation and outreach, improved language access and more.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 610, Food For All Oregonians. We know that when we all have access to food, we're all better off. Kids do better in school, our families' health and well-being improves, and our economy thrives through the support of local businesses. This is 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 the Oregon thrives.

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

Sincerely,

Pastor Macdonald Akuti.