



Oregon Just Transition Alliance

February 26th, 2023

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

Re: Yes on SB 610

My name is Joel Iboa, I live in Eugene, and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Just Transition Alliance (OJTA), a movement of communities facing environmental racism, climate change, and economic exploitation. I am submitting testimony in support of Senate Bill 610, Food For All Oregonians, which would ensure all of our neighbors have access to the food they need to keep them and their families healthy, regardless of immigration status.

OJTA supports this bill because we know that food sovereignty is foundational to a just transition in Oregon. Food sovereignty stresses the right to sufficient, healthy and culturally appropriate food for all individuals, peoples and communities. Our member organizations and steering committee support this bill, including Verde, Rogue Climate, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste, Beyond Toxics, OPAL Environmental Justice, and Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon.

Frontline communities, those hit first and worst by climate change also experience hunger at higher rates. In particular, immigrants, refugees and Compact of Free Association (COFA) community members 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-pandemic¹ – and this gap has only widened as our communities continue to struggle with COVID's ongoing impact and the rising cost of living.

¹https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/oregon_food_insecurity_rates_at_arrival_of_covid_2018-2020.pdf

When we asked frontline communities in rural and urban parts of Oregon about the most concerning issues they face, access to healthy, culturally appropriate food ranked in the top. Hunger was a crisis before the pandemic, and the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 have fallen hardest on immigrants without legal status. This is only exacerbated by extreme weather events like droughts and flooding, which impact communities reliant on agricultural and local food systems. In a workshop where we discussed the impacts of power outages caused by wildfires, extreme heat, and extreme winter weather, one mother without legal status said one of the hardest moments for her family was having to throw away a month's worth of food they had in their freezer.

Food for All Oregonians will create a state-funded program that eliminates exclusions to SNAP and make applying for assistance more welcoming. SB 610 will ensure everyone is aware of this vital support through community navigation, outreach, and improved language access. It will build on successful, community-driven navigator models to ensure trust and community safety.

We know that when we all have access to food, we're all better off and more resilient. 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 rural, urban, and suburban communities alike. When all of our neighbors are getting the food that they need, all of Oregon thrives.

This is why I am urging your yes vote on SB 610.

Sincerely,

Joel Iboa,
Executive Director, Oregon Just Transition Alliance