



# NEHALEM BAY

## HEALTH CENTER & PHARMACY

COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY CARE

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April 6, 2023

Members of the Committee:

My name is Angelica Godinez Garcia, I live in Tillamook Oregon, and I work for Nehalem Bay Health Center, a federally qualified health center that serves around 2,000 unique patients a year. I am writing today in support of Senate Bill 610, Food For All Oregonians. My main work involves helping patients find and enroll in health insurance and financial assistance programs so that they can access health care services in a way that is affordable to them. I am also a community health worker, meaning I serve as a bridge from our patients to community resources and I help them navigate those resources as well as the complex health care system.

By now, we all know that the pandemic had a huge impact on everything and everyone and really highlighted the disparities that our vulnerable populations continually face. Even though there were thousands of people in Tillamook County who were laid off for a few weeks, or more, in the beginning of the pandemic, and even though those thousands of people were left without an income they still had hungry bellies to feed, rent to pay, utility payments due, and more. It was only our community members who find themselves not meeting the minimum citizenship requirements for federally funded programs who were turned away and who were excluded from the opportunity to participate in such programs that helped many of our community members get through these tough past few years. Even though they were being affected financially just like everyone else, they were still expected to find ways to cover all of their needs out of their own pocket. This resulted in a lot of shuffling around where families moved many times trying to find sufficient work and some eventually moved away when there was nothing left for them.

One specific family comes to mind who had to move from one area of the county to another after the father and bread winner of the family suffered severe chemical burns from a work-related accident, one he did not receive any benefits from. The mother obtained a job where she worked 12-hour shifts, 6 to 7 days a week, missing out on quality time with her two young children. They worked with me, with other community resource agencies, and visited the local food banks for help, but eventually they moved out of the area to move in with another family because they just couldn't make ends meet with the little help they were receiving here.

This was heartbreaking to me because when I got my first apartment several years ago, there was a time where I was having car issues, making it difficult for me to meet my rent payment. I applied for SNAP and received about \$200 each month and while that is not a huge amount of money, it helped me make rent every month. I remember how lost I felt, especially with the housing crisis and how long it took me to find the apartment I was living in. The thought of not being able to make rent, starting from square one again, and knowing that it would likely take me several months to find another place was daunting. To see so many people have to uproot their families, disrupt their children's education and go through the challenges of moving, was incredibly hard to watch.

What is encouraging to me about SB 610 is that it's not the first of its kind. It would follow in the footsteps of Healthier Oregon, the Oregon Health Plan program that eliminated the minimum citizenship requirement for many adults. Within the health center here we have seen evidence of increase health care engagement and improvement in positive health outcomes just within the last ten months due to Healthier Oregon giving so many people the opportunity to engage in primary care without all the expensive medical bills.

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 Oregon thrives.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angelica Godinez Garcia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Angelica Godinez Garcia  
Outreach & Community Resource Manager, CHW  
Nehalem Bay Health Center & Pharmacy