

Submitter: Susan Heath

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Measure: SB5506

Chairs Steiner and Sanchez; Vice Chairs Girod, Gomberg and Smith; Members of the Committee: My name is Susan Heath and I live in Linn County, and I am writing in support of Senate Bill 610, Food For All Oregonians which would ensure all of our neighbors, regardless of immigration status, have access to the food they need to keep them 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 hardest 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's ongoing impact and the rising cost of living. Food for All Oregonians will create a state-funded program that eliminates exclusions to SNAP and make applying for assistance more welcoming. Food For All Oregonians makes food assistance available to all Oregonians who are currently excluded due to immigration status. It provides families with money for groceries that matches federal SNAP food assistance benefits and ensures everyone is aware of this vital support through community navigation and outreach, improved language access and more. 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. Kids do better in school, our families' health and well-being improve, 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, Susan Heath