

Submitter: David Wieland
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB703

My name is David Wieland and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Partners For a Hunger-Free Oregon. PHFO is a statewide anti-poverty advocacy organization with a small staff of 7. We understand that leadership comes from those with lived experience and that hunger and poverty do not exist on their own. They are the result of failing economic systems that require the exploitation of certain groups of people, including non-citizens, in order to continue. We believe every Oregonian deserves to feel safe and be treated with dignity, and that includes undocumented Oregonians.

We stand in strong support of SB 703, which directs the Oregon Department of Human Services to provide grants to assist non-citizens to change their documentation status. Oregonians who are not US citizens are disproportionately denied access to food benefits, but SB 703 presents an important opportunity to begin addressing this. Right now, 1 in 3 Oregonians who lack documentation are eligible for documentation under existing federal law. 146,949 Oregon immigrants are eligible for naturalization, and 270,830 immigrant workers sustain Oregon's labor force. The Department of Labor estimates 37% of farmworkers lack work authorization. Immigration status, combined with low wages and long working hours, make farmworkers extremely vulnerable to food insecurity.

With the proper documentation, non-citizens would qualify for the SNAP program which would not only give them access to food, it would also save Oregon local funding by diverting them to federally funded programs. Research from the Food Research and Action Network shows that SNAP is good for local economies – each dollar in federally funded SNAP benefits generates \$1.79 in economic activity. Currently, these SNAP dollars can only be accessed with the appropriate documentation.

Please support SB 703. It's not only the right thing to do for undocumented Oregonians, it's also the fiscally responsible thing to do for Oregon.

Sincerely,
David Wieland
Partners For a Hunger-Free Oregon