

Submitter: Chase Van Langen
On Behalf Of: Carolyn Luke
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB611

My name is Carolyn Luke and I live in Damascus, Oregon. I am a single mother and the Executive Director of a local food bank. I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 611, Food For All Oregonians which would ensure Youth and Elderly Oregonians, regardless of immigration status, have access to the food they need to keep them and their families healthy. I believe that food access is a basic human right that should be afforded to all. I have seen firsthand the dramatic increase in the numbers of our local community members that are facing food insecurity. It is my strong belief that additional funding is needed to support the members of our community most at risk of facing hunger, including children and seniors. Approximately 25% of our clients are 65 and older and 17% are children under 18. Oregon is facing a hunger crisis, and it is getting worse. Today, 1 in 6 children in Oregon don't have enough to eat, and one-third more Oregonians face hunger than before the COVID-19 pandemic. Food pantries across the state are confronting record-breaking levels of demand— the Oregon Food Bank has never seen this level of urgent need in its 40+ years of food banking. Despite paying billions in annual taxes in Oregon, immigrant Oregonians are twice as likely to face hunger and poverty in our state. Thousands of immigrant and refugee Oregonians are excluded from vital food assistance due to their immigration status. Food for All Oregonians (SB 611) will allow low-income Youth and Elder Oregonians to access the grocery benefits they need to thrive. These are Youth and Elders who are currently excluded from SNAP solely due to immigration status. Food for All 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 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 611. Thank you for your time. Sincerely, Carolyn Luke