



Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amanda Orozco, and I am a Policy Coordinator at Unite Oregon. We are an organization that champions the rights of immigrants, refugees, BIPOC, rural, and low-income individuals across the state. Unite has over 46,000 members and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 611, Food For All Oregonians, on their behalf.

At Unite Oregon, we believe that access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food is a basic human right. Too often, immigrant and refugee communities face significant barriers to obtaining adequate nutrition due to their immigration status. This exclusion not only affects their well-being but also undermines the vitality of our state as a whole. It is a glaring injustice that individuals who contribute so much to Oregon, such as farmworkers who feed us, are themselves unable to access the very food they help grow.

When we asked our members why SB 611 matters to them, many expressed gratitude for food banks and pantries across the state, but emphasized that these resources alone aren't sufficient. They noted that food assistance programs are far more effective at addressing hunger. Furthermore, food banks and pantries often provide items that some community members may not recognize or prefer. The Food For All Oregonians bill would give individuals the freedom to choose the foods they want and need, helping restore their dignity in the process.

Oregon's hunger crisis is real and escalating. One in six children in Oregon don't have enough to eat, and immigrant Oregonians, despite paying billions in taxes, are twice as likely to experience hunger and poverty. We know that food insecurity exacerbates health disparities, affects children's ability to learn, and creates long-term economic instability. That's why we are urging lawmakers to support SB 611 and help create an Oregon where no one goes hungry because of where they were born.

Food assistance plays a critical role in improving health outcomes, reducing healthcare costs, and supporting the economic stability of families. It is also a vital tool for preventing homelessness and fostering educational success. With this bill, immigrant youth and elders will no longer have to worry about their access to food, which is something that many of us take for granted.

This bill is not just about addressing hunger; it's about empowering our communities to thrive. By allowing immigrants, refugees, and low-income families to access nutritious food, we're also providing them with the tools and dignity to build a better future for themselves and their families.

On behalf of all members of Unite Oregon, we urge you to pass SB 611 to ensure that all Oregonians, regardless of immigration status, have the access to food they deserve. Thank you.



Sincerely,
Amanda Orozco
Policy Coordinator
Unite Oregon