

Submitter: Elizer Bello

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB611

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee, My name is Elizur Belli, Director of Programs at The Next Door, Inc. The Next Door is 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. We support Food for All because it will help ensure we are successful at meeting our mission of opening doors to new possibilities by strengthening children and families, and improving communities. We envision a supportive community where all children and families are safe, healthy, and valued. Food is a critical step in achieving this mission and vision, and we believe having access to healthy nutritious food is a human right. With programs focused on children and families, health equity, and basic human rights, we strongly support food for all Oregonians. Supporting our Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers, who support all of us in accessing healthy nutritious foods, it is only right they have the same access to those foods, but far too many of them do not. This not only leads to negative health outcomes, but is an injustice that has gone on for far too long, and Oregon can be a leader in changing that reality for our farm working families. Additionally, we understand the importance of children's access to food is directly linked to being successful students. Simply put, hungry students struggle, because it is hard to concentrate when you are hungry. If you have experienced hunger, like I have, then you know this to be true. As a Community Health Worker program director, I hear countless stories about our communities lack of access to healthy and nutritious foods. This is something we have the power to change, and like health care, Oregon can lead the way in doing so. Our local food banks have data and have asked us to support them with food distribution and they have noticed an uptick in Spanish speaking families accessing their food pantries, so we must do what we can to ensure people are fed. By ensuring access to healthy and nutritious foods, we will support families in being able to move ahead and hopefully thrive. Students will be able to focus and succeed in the classroom, parents will have piece of mind that their children will not go hungry, and will support them in being able to reduce their stress levels at work. Additionally, this effort will ensure people can focus their funds in stable homes as our area is very expensive to live in, and people are being displaced. Not worrying about buying enough food for the family can support them in being able to pay for other necessities otherwise not afforded to them. There is no harm that can come from Food for All Oregonians, on the contrary, only good can come when we feed people who otherwise would go hungry. Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely, Elizur Bello, Director of Programs The Next Door, Inc.