

TO: Senate Committee on Human Services

SUBJECT: Yes on SB 611

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

My name is Karen McCauley Skaggs, and I live and vote in Portland. 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.

Many things can lead to food insecurity, and many of these things are beyond our control. I am the mother of a daughter who is now full grown; when she was 9 years old, her father passed away quite suddenly. He had not carried a life insurance policy, and as is true of many working-class families, we did not have much money saved. I was left to raise my daughter and pay the mortgage and all other bills on my salary alone, with nominal help from social security survivor benefits. At the time, I was a self-employed home inspector with a business that was growing but only a few years old. Then, less than two years later, came 2008, when the economy and the housing market crashed. My home, like so many others, was soon “underwater” value-wise, and my home inspection business all but vanished. At this time, I was very fortunate to qualify for Snap benefits so that I could keep nutritious food on the table for my daughter and myself. ALL children, indeed all humans, need nutritious food to grow and learn and play; ***I believe that it is even more critical that good food is available to children that have additional stressors and challenges in their young lives.*** Safe shelter, access to good food and clean air and water are basic human rights; without them, society as a whole suffers and cannot flourish. Access to Snap benefits was instrumental in my ability to keep my house, rebuild my business and keep my child healthy; within the year, I was able to go off Snap as I gradually rebuilt our lives. No one should go hungry! This is especially true for kids, elders, and others who are at-risk in our society. ***Please pass SB 611 to help stem the growing hunger crisis in Oregon!***

The Oregon Food Bank faces historically record-breaking levels in demand, and we must not let our fellow citizens go hungry. 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.

These are our neighbors, our family, our friends, the children our kids play with, our coworkers and their loved ones— the people who help make Oregon a beautiful place to live. Access to food should not depend on where we were born. **I urge you to envision an Oregon where anyone who needs food can get it.**

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,

Karen McCauley Skaggs

Portland, Oregon