

Submitter: Bravo Valdez
On Behalf Of: Health Care for All Oregon
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB611

My name is Valdez Bravo, President at Health Care for All Oregon (HCAO), a membership organization of over 130 endorsing organizations and tens of thousands of supporters around the state. Our organization strongly supports Senate Bill 611, the Food For All Oregonians Program, which would ensure youth and elderly Oregonians, regardless of immigration status, have access to the food they need to keep themselves and their families healthy. HCAO believes that health care is a human right and is committed to fighting for health justice and ending health inequities for Oregonians. We have witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of food insecurity on our community, particularly among immigrant families. The demand for our services has increased significantly in recent years, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive food assistance programs. Food security is not just about alleviating hunger; it is intrinsically linked to better health outcomes, improved educational performance, and stronger communities. We have observed that when families have access to nutritious food: Children perform better in school and have fewer absences Adults are more likely to maintain employment and housing stability Overall physical and mental health improves, reducing healthcare costs SB 611 is a crucial step towards addressing these interconnected issues. By providing food assistance to youth and elders currently excluded from SNAP due to immigration status, we can break the cycle of poverty and hunger that disproportionately affects immigrant communities. Oregon is facing a hunger crisis, with 1 in 6 children not having enough to eat. This situation is even more dire for immigrant Oregonians, who are twice as likely to face hunger and poverty despite contributing billions in annual taxes. Food for All Oregonians would help bridge this gap, ensuring that our neighbors, friends, and coworkers – regardless of where they were born – have access to the food they need to thrive. We know that food security benefits extend far beyond individual families. When all Oregonians can afford groceries, local economies grow, and communities flourish. This is true across rural, urban, and suburban areas of our state. Five states, including our neighbors Washington and California, have already implemented similar programs to improve SNAP eligibility for immigrants and refugees. Oregon has the opportunity to join these states in recognizing that food is a human right and that our collective well-being depends on ensuring everyone has access to nutritious, culturally familiar food. We urge you to envision an Oregon where anyone who needs food can get it. By passing SB 611, you have the power to make significant strides towards ending child hunger in our state and creating a more equitable, healthy, and prosperous Oregon for all. This is why Health Care for All Oregon strongly urges your YES vote on SB 611.