

March 12th, 2025

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 Melina Peña Anaya and I live in the city of Newberg. I am also a current graduate student at the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health and a proud daughter of immigrant Oregonians. I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 611, Food For All Oregonians, which would ensure that Oregonians under 26 and over 55 have access to food, regardless of immigration status.

Last year, the Oregon Food Bank saw 2.5 million visits to food assistance sites through their Network — a 31% increase from the previous year. These numbers show that food security is a serious issue in Oregon as the cost of food continues to rise and has become unaffordable for low-income families. Today, 1 in 6 Oregonian children don't have enough to eat. Food insecurity disproportionately impacts communities of color and immigrant communities which further exacerbate health inequities, especially in children where food insecurity can have detrimental effects on a child's physical and mental development.

Access to food should not depend on where we are born. Food is a human right. No one should ever have to stress over having to choose between paying bills or buying food. Our communities ability to thrive is dependent on having access to nutritious and culturally familiar food. The Food For All Oregonians Program addresses food insecurity by increasing access to nutrition assistance to a tax-paying community that has continuously been left out of federal assistance programs and is more likely to experience hunger.

One of the biggest misconceptions is that immigrant families don't pay taxes which is completely false. Undocumented Oregonians alone pay nearly \$81 million in state and local taxes each year, yet they are continuously excluded from vital safety nets. We cannot continue to ignore our neighbors, our family, our friends, our coworkers and their families. When we all have access to nutritious food, we can all thrive as a community.

As the economy continues to worsen and the costs of living become more unattainable, there will be an ongoing hunger crisis and its end is nowhere in sight. You all have the power to help end child hunger in Oregon.

I urge you to vote Yes on Food for All Oregonians, Senate Bill 611.

Thank you for your time.