

Submitter: Laura Hanks  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB611

Dear Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee, My name is Laura Hanks and I live in Milwaukie, OR. I am a retired Physicians Assistant who volunteers with Portland Street Medicine. 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. I grew up in rural Washington State and relied on the school lunch program as a kid. I have worked with food insecure folks throughout my career as a PA. Oregon is facing a hunger crisis, and it is getting worse. Today, 1 in 6 children in Oregon don't have enough to eat, and one-third more Oregonians face hunger than before the COVID-19 pandemic. Food pantries across the state are confronting record-breaking levels of demand– the Oregon Food Bank has never seen this level of urgent need in its 40+ years of food banking. 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. 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, Laura Hanks Milwaukie, OR