

Submitter:

Margaret Parks

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB611

I don't have a personal story of being excluded from food assistance, or even from having needed it. Though I have in the past faced weeks with \$15, a bare cupboard, and hopes that something didn't go wrong with me or my car before payday. I can however share the thoughts I've had since learning of Food for All Oregonians. Sometimes at the end of the day I do what a lot of parents do – go around the house, picking up a few things here or there, even though I'm too tired to get much done. When I find my son's little socks stuck halfway into a couch cushion (or once in the linen closet) I smile almost every time. I think about the conversations I have with my son. "Mama, why does the earth spin?" "I don't know sweetie" I say, "let's look it up". Lately I also think of the conversations I don't have with my son. I don't have to tell him that the soup isn't very good today because there wasn't much to put in it. That I didn't get off work while the food pantry at the church was open. Back in the here and now, I'm still picking up clothes, and I wonder, how many thousands of other children must have these same little socks, that look grubby even when freshly washed? How many of them are having a very different conversation with their parent or caregiver, that there just isn't more food when they are hungry? As much as I want to, I can't feed all those children in Oregon who are hungry. But together, as Oregonians, we can, through the Food for All Oregonians bill. I have thought also of my grandfather's grandmother. I don't know how old she was when she came to America. I don't know if she came alone. Did she come with an elderly relative? Was she a teenager at the time? Did she bring a younger relative with her? Did she already have the nickname "Minnie" because Wilhelmina was a long name? What if she immigrated only three years ago, and hit a rough patch? That elderly relative - who had come so far through time and space – and that child who sits with Minnie in my imagination, who came so far and still with much further to go in life - I would want to feed them. I can't feed the Minnies in our neighborhoods. And there are many in Oregon. But together, as Oregonians, we can feed them. In the end, I support Food for All Oregonians because I just don't care. I don't care if someone isn't quite eligible for food assistance as the laws stand now. That in another few months they will be. They are hungry now, they are in distress now, and we as Oregonians, can do something about it by passing Food for All Oregonians.