



Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Farmers Market Fund

SUBJECT: Yes on SB 611

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

My name is Rachael Ward, Executive Director at Farmers Market Fund (FMF). FMF is 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.

The mission of Farmers Market Fund is to make healthy, locally grown food accessible to under-served Oregonians. This mission is grounded in a shared belief that no one should be denied the food they need to eat well. As the creator and main administrator of the Double Up Food Bucks program, which matches the value of SNAP benefits at farmers markets, farm stands, CSAs and grocery stores, **we know the power of SNAP**. SNAP is one of the strongest, most effective methods for addressing food insecurity and poverty. Shoppers who use their SNAP benefits to buy from local Oregonian retailers input more money back into the local economy and help small businesses and entrepreneurs thrive. For every dollar of SNAP, there is \$1.80 put back into the economy, supporting the supply chain from farmer to store. In 2023, over \$1.86M in SNAP was accepted at 3,500 Oregon retailers. **Opening eligibility for SNAP increases the amount of SNAP dollars circulating in our state, which in turn supports the local economy!**

I want to be clear. As the Double Up Food Bucks program is currently designed, there is no guarantee that we would be able to match SNAP benefits secured by families under the Food For All eligibility. We are tied to restrictions with our federal funding which limits eligibility of Double Up Food Bucks funds to matching SNAP benefits that are federally funded. However, **we are committed to supporting this cause and doing our due diligence to find ways for customers using the Food For All benefit to have access to locally grown, fresh food because we believe that food is a human right**. No one should have to choose between paying their bills or putting food on the table.

We are inspired by the work of five states, including Washington and California, who have state programs that improve SNAP eligibility for immigrants and refugees. Food for All is modeled after these programs and built with the expertise of Oregonians with lived experiences of hunger and our immigration system.

This bill would help struggling immigrants, refugees, and families across our state. We have farmworkers who are planting, growing, and harvesting the very foods that nourish all of us, and yet they cannot



access these foods themselves or their families. These are our neighbors, our family, our friends, our students, the children our kids play with, our coworkers and their loved ones– the people who help make Oregon a beautiful place to live. No one should be denied access to food when they need it, regardless of their immigration status.

The benefits of addressing food insecurity stretch far and wide into several aspects of personal and community health. Food assistance is linked to improved health outcomes, reduced health care costs, eviction prevention, job retention, and improved behavioral health. 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.

Food is a Human Right. Our freedom, our health, our ability to thrive all depend on access to food that is nutritious and culturally familiar. This is why I am urging your YES vote on SB 611.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachael Ward". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rachael Ward, Executive Director  
Farmers Market Fund  
*Serving the entire state of Oregon*