

Submitter: Catherine Cascade
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB611

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

My name is Catherine Cascade and I live in Eugene. I am a retired member of the clergy and a longtime volunteer with organizations affiliated with Food For Lane County. For 12 years I volunteered with the Goldson Food Pantry in rural Lane County. Since moving to Eugene I've been volunteering with Burrito Brigade. With both organizations I joined others in working to get food to people who would otherwise be "food insecure." What a viscerally disturbing term that is!

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, as well as information about where to avail themselves of that access. Many "food insecure" people simply don't know that food is available to them and/or where to go to get it.

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.

Food for All Oregonians (SB 611) will allow low-income Youth and Elder Oregonians to access the grocery benefits they need to thrive. These are Youth and Elders who are currently excluded from SNAP solely due to immigration status. Food for All will build on successful, community-driven navigator models to ensure trust and community safety.

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.

I cannot urge you more strongly to vote YES vote on SB 611. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Catherine Cascade
Eugene, Oregon