

Submitter:

Christina Bentrup

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB611

I am asking legislators to pass SB 611 so all Oregonians can have access to the same basic rights, including the right to food, regardless of where they or their parents were born. It feels very simple - we are all immigrants and we all need food. When I say we are all immigrants, I of course mean that our parents or grandparents or relatives further back came here from somewhere else. My grandfather was an Irish immigrant who came to America as a solo teenager to seek a life with greater economic opportunity. He succeeded and raised a large family, whose children went on to become teachers, nurses, nuns, and business people. My family's success is because my grandfather was accepted here and was given the support he needed to raise a family and thrive. To the second point - we all need food, many times a day. The knowledge that our next meal is reliably coming allows us to focus on our work, our school, our families, and community. Without this certainty, people experience hunger and its many side-effects. Their health outcomes are worse, they are unable to work or study, causing greater costs to society than the cost of providing a reliable source of food. Food banks cannot be relied upon to provide the solution. As much as we also need our food banks, they should be a safety net for when food benefits run out, not the first place people turn. Food banks have irregular hours on irregular days with much less choice than a grocery store. If someone's health needs requires a special diet, or their cultural needs are only met with specific foods, they often cannot meet these needs at a food bank. I have heard that every \$1 spent on food benefits like SNAP results in \$1.50 or more in local economic activity, so really there is no reason to vote against this bill. As a granddaughter of immigrants, and as someone who needs to eat multiple times a day, I ask you to consider your own family's story and urge you to recognize yourself in your hungry neighbors. Support this bill that will allow your neighbors to live with dignity and contribute to your community with their whole selves.