

Testimony in Support of SB 611 – Food for All Oregonians

My name is Alexis Molinari, and I am the Market Director at Lane County Farmers Market in Eugene, Oregon. The Lane County Farmers Market is proud to support Senate Bill 611, Food for All Oregonians, which will expand access to food for youth and elderly Oregonians, regardless of immigration status.

At Lane County Farmers Market, we are committed to making fresh, locally grown food accessible to everyone in our community. To help people with limited resources, we accept SNAP (also known as food stamps) benefits at the market, allowing people to spend their benefits directly with local farmers and food producers. Additionally, we offer a matching program called Double Up Food Bucks Program that doubles SNAP benefits up to \$20 once every market day, helping people access even more fresh, local, and healthy produce.

In 2024 alone, we redeemed **\$495,199** in SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks benefits, showing just how vital these programs are to our community and the local economy. These programs are not only providing food security to those in need, but they are also directly benefiting local farmers and food vendors by increasing their sales and sustaining their livelihoods.

We've partnered with Food for All Oregonians in the past to support their outreach and advocacy efforts by hosting them at the market. These partnerships help connect more people to the food assistance they need, especially for immigrants and refugees, who are often excluded from vital food assistance programs due to their immigration status. We are committed to building a market environment where everyone, regardless of background or immigration status, can access fresh food and feel empowered to be part of the market community. However, we know there is still much work to be done to ensure that all Oregonians have access to nutritious food.

Many of our immigrant community members work in the agriculture sector, planting, harvesting, and growing the very food that nourishes all of us. Yet, despite their essential role in our food system, many of them and their families are excluded from SNAP and other food assistance programs due to their immigration status. This is an injustice that SB 611 will help address by expanding food assistance for youth and elderly Oregonians, no matter their immigration status.

SNAP is one of the most effective tools we have in fighting food insecurity. When individuals and families have access to healthy food, they stay healthier, and contribute more to their communities. However, too many immigrants and refugees remain excluded from SNAP benefits because of arbitrary barriers. These exclusions harm not only the individuals who are denied assistance but also weaken our communities, food systems, and local economy.

At Lane County Farmers Market, we've witnessed the increasing demand for food assistance, especially among marginalized communities. SB 611 gives lawmakers the chance to address this need and remove barriers that prevent people from accessing food, particularly those who are already struggling. These are our neighbors, coworkers, and friends who often face barriers to basic food security. This bill is a key step in making sure we are strengthening the fabric of the community.

Moreover, expanding access to food for underserved communities has broader economic benefits. As we've seen through our programs, the increase in food assistance dollars directly leads to more sales for local farmers and vendors, which in turn strengthens our local food economy. Investing in food access programs is an investment in the prosperity of our LCFM members and the broader economic health of our region.

We urge you to support SB 611 and help ensure that every Oregonian, particularly our most vulnerable youth and elderly, has access to the food they need to lead healthy, fulfilling lives. Thank you for your time and consideration.

In community,

Alexis Molinari, Lane County Farmers Market