

Submitter: Stefan Joseph
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB611

TO: Senate Committee on Human Services SUBJECT: Yes on SB 611 Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee, My name is Stefan and I live in Portland, Oregon. I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 611, Food For All Oregonians which would ensure Youth and Elder Oregonians, regardless of immigration status, have access to the food they need to keep them and their families healthy. My parents immigrated to the United States from Haiti. Thanks to the tireless foundational efforts of their parents, they were able to pursue higher education, meet one another, and eventually give me a life in this country too. Today, I benefit from generations of immigrant investment in American society. And I mean deep investment. Firsthand, I have seen the tremendous measure of industry my parents and their parents pour into their communities: Fingers completely worn from decades of janitorial work at the local elementary school. Late nights spent preparing for an ailing patient's impending pediatric surgery. Throats hoarse from coaching me and my classmates to victory on the soccer field. Seemingly permanent eye-bags from endless hours of reviewing reports on prescription drugs that could one day be a sick American's last hope for recovery. Mountains of dishes dirtied feeding the masses at high school potlucks. The list goes on and on... Suffice to say, my parents' and grandparents' everyday lives here serve this country in ways big and small, by means recognizable and barely noticeable. Throughout my life, my foremothers and forefathers have contributed to this country just as any natural-born American would. When I recall all of their herculean efforts, I cannot imagine why immigrants like them would be any less deserving of a reliable and healthy source of food in this country. And yet, 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 they were born. I urge you to envision an Oregon where anyone who needs food can get it. An Oregon that could support more stories just like my family's and be further enriched for it. Senate Bill 611 will make that a reality. 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. This is why I am urging your YES vote on SB 611. Thank you for your time. Sincerely, Stefan Portland, Oregon