

March 24, 2025

Senator Gelser Blouin, Chair  
Senate Committee on Human Services  
900 Court Street, NE  
Salem, OR. 97301

**RE: In Support of SB 611 – Regarding Food for All Oregonians**

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

We are writing to express support for Senate Bill 611, which would establish the Food for All Oregonians Program to provide nutrition assistance to people who would qualify for federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), except for their immigration status.

Hunger was a crisis in Multnomah County before the pandemic, and the health and economic disparity has fallen hard on newly-arrived Oregonians. Immigrant Oregonians are twice as likely to face hunger and poverty in our state—and this gap has only widened with the rising cost of food and housing. 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 for All Oregonians (SB 611) would utilize smart state public policy to counteract the inequitable impact of current federal SNAP exclusions based on immigration status. This policy will allow low-income Youth and Elder Oregonians to access the grocery benefits they need to thrive. Food for All will build on successful, community-driven navigator models to ensure trust and community safety. The views of members of the impacted communities were centered in designing this policy and we believe the holistic approach will be effective at equitably increasing access to nutrition assistance.

Multnomah County invests in several strategies to increase food security for our community members, including school-based food pantries, WIC and senior nutrition assistance programs, which are available regardless of immigration status. This has been critical to their successful impact. Multnomah County also plays a role in SNAP outreach through Bienestar de la Familia and SNAP eligibility determinations through our Aging, Disability, and Veterans Services. As a result, our staff sees first-hand the current limitations within the federal SNAP program to equitably serve newly-arrived community members.

Food assistance is linked to improved health outcomes, reduced health care costs, eviction prevention, job retention, and improved behavioral health. A study of new SNAP participants found that after just 6 months of starting SNAP, households were more likely to become employed or keep their job. By ensuring adequate nutrition for child development, food assistance is proven to improve children's academic performance, reduce the likelihood that a child will drop out of school, reduce school absenteeism, and create conditions for developing healthy social skills.

Thank you for considering our comments on SB 611. We believe that this proposal will help improve the health and wellbeing of youth and elders across our county and the state. We respectfully request your support for this critical step to ensure our community has equitable access to the food needed to thrive.

Sincerely,



Mohammad Bader  
Director  
Department of County Human Services