

March 24, 2025

Chair Gelser Blouin and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services,

For the record, my name is Dr. Elizabeth Cox Brand, and I am the Director of the Student Success Center at the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA). OCCA strongly supports SB 611 the Food for All Oregonians Act. Ensuring access to nutritious food is essential for student success, and this bill represents a critical step toward addressing food insecurity among Oregon's diverse communities, including many community college students and their families.

Community colleges serve a broad population of students, including those from immigrant backgrounds, first-generation college students, and individuals working to build better lives for themselves and their families. Many of these students struggle with food insecurity, which can negatively impact their ability to focus on coursework, remain enrolled, and complete their degrees or credentials. By expanding access to nutrition assistance for individuals who would otherwise qualify for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) but for their immigration status, this bill removes an unnecessary barrier to success.

The Food for All Oregonians Act will ensure that all eligible residents, regardless of their background, have the resources they need to thrive. In addition to providing direct nutrition support, the bill requires the Department of Human Services to conduct statewide outreach, education, and engagement to maximize program enrollment. These efforts will be crucial in helping students and families connect with available resources in a dignified and welcoming manner.

Further, we support the creation of an advisory group to recommend metrics that evaluate how public assistance applicants are treated. All individuals seeking support should be met with respect, courtesy, fairness, and dignity. This component of the bill reinforces Oregon's commitment to equity and inclusion, values that are at the heart of the community college mission.

We urge the legislature to pass this bill and take meaningful action to combat food insecurity in Oregon. By doing so, the state will strengthen its workforce, promote student success, and uphold the principle that no one in our community should go hungry.

Thank you for your time and consideration.