

March 24, 2025

TO: Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Aly Larson, Our Children Oregon

SUBJECT: Support for SB 611

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

My name is Aly Larson, Communications and Policy Coordinator at Our Children Oregon, a statewide organization that advances equitable policies, data and research, and whole-child advocacy. The Children's Agenda, convened by OCO, brings together a coalition of more than 135 organizations statewide dedicated to improving child wellbeing in Oregon.

**Senate Bill 611, Food For All Oregonians, is a top priority of the 2025 Children's Agenda and has strong and widespread support from our partner organizations across Oregon.**

Food For All Oregonians would ensure that youth and elderly Oregonians, regardless of immigration status, have access to the food they need to keep them and their families healthy.

**Oregon is facing a hunger crisis, and it is getting worse.** Food insecurity is experienced when people are unable to access the food they need to thrive.<sup>1</sup> According to OCO's KIDS COUNT Data Cards, 17.3% of Oregon's youth faced

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/food-insecurity>

food insecurity in 2022– an increase of nearly 5% from 2021, when the rate was 12.4%.<sup>2</sup>

**Food for All Oregonians is even more necessary in Oregon, as the state has a higher percentage of children living in immigrant families in which resident parents are not U.S. citizens than the national average.** In 2022, 36% of children lived in immigrant families in which resident parents were not U.S. citizens in Oregon. This population of children is also growing. From 2021 to 2022, the percentage of children living in immigrant families in which resident parents were not U.S. citizens in Oregon increased 4%.<sup>3</sup>

**Food security is a human right and is critical in childhood development.**

During my time as an early childhood educator, I saw firsthand the impact of food insecurity on early childhood development. Kids who came to preschool consistently without breakfast struggled significantly more with behavioral issues, participation in social-emotional learning, and engaging in play. They were also more likely to sleep during individual play and group activities, therefore missing out on the valuable opportunities preschool offers for children to get to know themselves and others as they discover their individuality.

**We know that when we all have access to food, we're all better off.** 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.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/publications/oregon-kids-count/>

We appreciate the work you do for Oregon's children and families each and every day and **we strongly urge you to help make Oregon a state where anyone who needs food can get it.**

**Please vote YES on SB 611, Food For All Oregonians.**

Sincerely,

Aly Larson, Communications & Policy Coordinator, Our Children Oregon

View the [2025 Children's Agenda](https://www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2025-childrens-agenda)