

March 24, 2025

To: Senate Committee On Human Services

RE: Support for SB 611 (Food for All Oregonians)

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

My name is Marisol De La Torre, and I am the government relations and legislative advocate of Oregon Just Transition Alliance (OJTA). We are a member-based alliance of over 20 urban and rural communities across Oregon, representing thousands of people. I am submitting testimony in support of SB 611 (Food for All Oregonians), which would allow our Youth and Elder Oregonians, regardless of immigration status to access food benefits they need to keep them and their families healthy.

OJTA supports SB 611 because we recognize that food sovereignty is foundational to a Just Transition in Oregon. Food sovereignty stresses the right to sufficient, healthy, and culturally appropriate food for all individuals, peoples, and communities. Our member organizations support this bill, including Verde, Rogue Climate, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), Beyond Toxics, Unite Oregon, and Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO).

Immigrants, refugees, and Compact of Free Association (COFA) community members have long faced higher rates of hunger and poverty in Oregon due to being excluded from these lifelines. During our 2020 statewide listening tour, food insecurity was ranked a top issue among rural and urban communities. Hunger was a crisis before the pandemic, and the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 have fallen hardest on immigrants without legal status, including lawfully present non-citizens that have not met the five year waiting period requirement. Hunger is made worse by climate disasters, which affect frontline communities the hardest. During a workshop on extreme weather-related power outages, one mother shared that one of her family's most difficult moments was losing a month's worth of food from their freezer due to an outage.

SB 611 addresses Oregon's hunger issue by creating a state-funded program that eliminates exclusions to SNAP and simplifies applying for assistance. This legislation will ensure everyone is aware of this vital support through community navigation, outreach,

and improved language access. It will build on successful, community-driven navigator models to ensure trust and community safety.

We know that when we are all able to feed ourselves, we are better off and more resilient. Kids do better in school, our families' health and well-being improve, and our economy thrives through the support of local businesses. This is true in rural, urban, and suburban communities alike. When all of our neighbors are getting the food they need, all of Oregon thrives.

I urge you to vote yes on SB 611.

Thank you,
Marisol De La Torre
Government Relations & Legislative Advocate
Oregon Just Transition Alliance
Marisol@OJTA.org