

Submitter: Timothy Herrera
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB611

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

My name is Timothy Herrera and I live in Eugene. As an engaged community leader, I personally know many families and elderly in Lane County that face food insecurity and are excluded from SNAP benefits and as a faculty member at the University of Oregon, some of my students who experience food insecurity face those some exclusions. I am writing to advocate for Senate Bill 611, Food For All Oregonians, not just as a matter of policy, but as a crucial step towards fostering a truly equitable and resilient Oregon.

My support for SB 611 stems from a direct encounter with systemic injustice. My research with Oregon's farm workers during the pandemic revealed a painful truth: the very people who feed us face high rates of food insecurity. 54% of the farm workers in our statewide survey relied on food banks, and those who identified as Indigenous faced even higher rates of food insecurity, 67%. Many of the farm workers who were interviewed, were in their fifties and despite facing health issues, continue to work to try to feed their families. Their stories showed me how deeply our current system fails those who give so much.

Food For All isn't just about providing sustenance; it's about restoring dignity. It's about ensuring that the children I see playing in our neighborhood parks, the students I teach, and the individuals who contribute to our local economy are not burdened by the constant anxiety of food scarcity. Imagine the ripple effect within our community when everyone has the assurance of a stable food source. Children will arrive at school ready to learn, not distracted by hunger pangs. Families will have the resources to invest in their future, and our local businesses will benefit from a healthier, more engaged workforce.

We are all vulnerable to unforeseen circumstances. Building a safety net that catches everyone is not charity, it's about building resilient and thriving communities in Oregon. I envision an Oregon where the question of "where will my next meal come from?" is not an issue for an Oregonian, regardless of where someone was born. By voting yes on SB 611, you are not just passing a bill; you are investing in the health, stability, and future of our entire state.

Thank you for your support on SB 611,

Sincerely,
Timothy Herrera, PhD
Eugene, Oregon