

3/25/2025

Testimony in support of bill SB 611

Senate Committee on Human Services

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

My name is Sam Guthman, and I am the Policy Manager at APANO Communities United Fund and APANO Action Fund. Our organization is in strong support of Senate Bill 611, Food for All Oregonians, which ensures that youth and elder Oregonians, regardless of immigration status, have access to the food they need to keep themselves and their families healthy.

APANO represents Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities across Oregon, many of whom are directly impacted by food insecurity and systemic barriers to assistance. The people we serve are farmworkers, service workers, caregivers, and community members who contribute to Oregon's economy yet remain excluded from federal food assistance programs due to their immigration status. We believe that **access to food is a fundamental human right** and that no one should have to choose between paying their bills and feeding their family.

- Hunger in Oregon is worsening: Today, 1 in 6 children in Oregon don't have enough to eat. Immigrant Oregonians, despite paying billions in taxes, are twice as likely to face hunger and poverty due to exclusions from federal food programs.
- Food insecurity leads to instability: Families struggling to afford groceries are also at higher risk of housing insecurity, educational disruptions, and health crises. Expanding access to food benefits reduces homelessness, improves health outcomes, and strengthens economic stability.
- **Food is a Human Right:** No one should be denied food because of where they were born. Farmworkers, who harvest the food that nourishes Oregon, should not be going hungry themselves.
- Oregon's economy benefits from food security: When people have consistent access to food, children perform better in school, workers are more productive, and local businesses thrive. Addressing food insecurity strengthens the entire state.

SB 611 builds on proven models from states like Washington and California, which have successfully expanded food assistance to immigrants. This bill provides grocery benefits to youth and elders currently excluded from SNAP due to immigration status and uses trusted, community-driven navigator models to ensure safe and accessible enrollment in food assistance programs. We will strengthen Oregon's commitment to equity by removing immigration status as a barrier to food security.

Food insecurity weakens our communities, strains social services, and exacerbates racial and economic disparities. SB 611 is a necessary step in ensuring that all Oregonians—regardless of immigration status—have access to the food they need to live healthy, stable lives. **Immigrants are people just like you and I, just like your mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, and we all need to eat.** We urge the committee to pass SB 611 and make Oregon a place where no one goes hungry.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sam Guthman
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