

DATE: February 13, 2025

TO: Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Our Children Oregon, Chloe Acosta

SUBJECT: Yes on SB 611

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 611. My name is Chloe Acosta (constituent of Vice-Chair Linthicum) and I am a Policy and Advocacy Intern for Our Children Oregon (OCO), a statewide organization that advances equitable policies, data and research, and whole-child advocacy. **This year, SB 611, Food for All Oregonians, is a top priority in Our Children Oregon's 2025 Children's Agenda.**

Oregon is facing a hunger crisis, and it is getting worse. **Today, 1 in 6 children in Oregon don't have enough to eat**, and one-third more Oregonians face hunger than before the COVID-19 pandemic. Food pantries across the state are confronting record-breaking levels of demand—the Oregon Food Bank has never before seen this level of urgent need in its 40+ years of food banking.

As a rural elementary educator, I have seen the impacts on students when they do not have access to food. The school I work at gets deliveries of weekly food pantry bags for students in need. The children who receive those food pantry bags light up every Friday as they now know they do not have to worry about food access over the weekend. Imagine what Oregon would look like if every student was able to access food?

By ensuring adequate nutrition for child development, food assistance is proven to improve children's academic performance, reduce the likelihood

that a child will drop out of school, reduce school absenteeism, and create conditions for developing healthy social skills.

Food for All Oregonians (SB 611) will allow low-income youth and elder Oregonians to access the grocery benefits they need to thrive. **These are youth and elders who are currently excluded from SNAP solely due to immigration status.**

Oregon lawmakers have the power to make sure no child goes hungry. And yet, today, 1 in 6 children in Oregon don't have enough food to eat. **Food is a human right.** No one should have to choose between paying their bills or putting food on the table.

Our Children Oregon urges you to support Food for All Oregonians and **vote YES on SB 611.**

Thank you,

Chloe Acosta, Policy and Advocacy Intern, Our Children Oregon

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