



Oregon moms and caregivers fighting for gender, economic, and racial justice.

To: Senate Committee on Human Services
From: Family Forward Oregon
Date: 3/25/2025
RE: In Support of SB 611

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Lithicum, and members of the committee,

Family Forward is in strong support of Senate Bill 611, Food For All Oregonians, which would ensure youth and elderly Oregonians, regardless of immigration status, have access to the food they need to keep them and their families healthy.

Family Forward acknowledges that Oregon is facing a severe hunger crisis, with 1 in 6 children lacking access to sufficient food and a 33% increase in Oregonians struggling with hunger since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The demand on Oregon's food pantries has reached an all-time high, with the Oregon Food Bank experiencing its highest level of need in over 40 years. Immigrant Oregonians, who contribute billions to the state's taxes annually, are twice as likely to face hunger and poverty due to their exclusion from vital food assistance programs. This not only harms families but also weakens the economy, destabilizes communities, and strains critical systems.

Access to nutritious and culturally relevant food is a fundamental human right, crucial for our overall well-being, health, and autonomy. Every person has the inherent right to enjoy wholesome food that meets their dietary needs and cultural preferences without compromising on other essential necessities.

Food assistance has far-reaching benefits that extend beyond basic sustenance: improved health outcomes, reduced healthcare costs, eviction prevention, job retention, and better behavioral health. When everyone has access to nutritious food, our communities flourish - children excel academically, families' overall health improves, and local economies experience growth.

This issue goes beyond hunger; having access to wholesome food has a profound impact on individuals, transcending basic needs. Adequate nutrition for children not only enhances academic performance but also reduces dropout rates and cultivates healthy social skills. By ensuring all Oregonians have access to nourishing food, we build a stronger, more prosperous state - from rural towns to urban centers, where everyone can thrive.

SB 611, Food for All Oregonians, aims to provide low-income youth and elder Oregonians with essential grocery benefits, regardless of their immigration status. Inspired by successful programs in Washington and California, this bill leverages community-driven navigator models to ensure trust and safety. By expanding SNAP eligibility to include immigrants and refugees, we will support struggling families, neighbors, friends, students, coworkers, and farmworkers who contribute to Oregon's food system yet face barriers to accessing it themselves. Food for All seeks to eradicate hunger and poverty driven by immigration status, ensuring everyone has the nourishment they need to thrive.

The voices of thousands of Oregonians have been heard, with emails and postcards pouring in, urging lawmakers to take action on Food for All Oregonians. The time for passage is now, during this legislative session. It's unacceptable that 1 in 6 children in Oregon face hunger today. Lawmakers hold the power to change this reality. By passing SB 611, they can take a crucial step toward ending child hunger in our state, creating a brighter future for all Oregonians.

Family Forward urges you to vote YES on SB 611 and make a difference for Oregon's most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for your consideration.

Selina Biniam

Advocacy Manager
Family Forward Oregon

