

Submitter: Stephanie Barr
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB611

FFAO Testimony Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee, My name is Stephanie Barr, Executive Director of Lift Urban Portland. We are 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. Food is a fundamental human right, and alleviating hunger is a community-wide responsibility. Over the past four years, I have witnessed a historic rise in the need for nutritious food access. Lift UP has expanded our food programs by 56% in the last three years to meet growing needs. We see the direct correlation between Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and hunger. When COVID-era investments in SNAP were eliminated, the number of people accessing our pantry increased by 30% within a few months. Nearly one-third of the people we served last year never had to rely on a local food pantry. Portland cannot accept this degree of hunger among our neighbors. We need a policy solution to feed our community. Food for All Oregonians will ensure tens of thousands of Oregonians left out of SNAP, including asylum seekers, immigrants, and refugees have access to our country's most effective anti-hunger program for the first time. Studies show SNAP is critical in preventing homelessness and lowers healthcare costs by helping low-income individuals meet nutritional needs. At Lift UP, 90% of the people served can better manage their health because of the nutritious food access provided. When our neighbors have the food they need our entire Portland community thrives. I urge lawmakers to pass Food for All Oregonians and reduce hunger driven by immigration status.