

Submitter: Halle Riddlebarger

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB611

TO: Senate Committee on Human Services FROM: Medford Food Co-op SUBJECT: Yes on SB611 February 12, 2025 Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee, My name is Halle Riddlebarger and I'm writing on behalf of Medford Food Co-op. Medford Food Co-op is a local community-owned grocery store located in Medford, Oregon. The Co-op is cooperatively-owned by almost 5,000 community members. We feature organic produce from local farmers and a variety of local and regional products, from fresh produce to bulk goods to beer and wine. We exist to cultivate a thriving local food economy, and a vibrant, inclusive community. We are writing today in 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. All Oregonians deserve access to food. When our communities are well nourished, we are all better off. Food assistance through programs like SNAP has been proven to yield significant improvements for health outcomes, reduce the state's health care costs, improve children's academic performance, reduce chronic school absenteeism, reduce the household's risk of eviction, and more. For every dollar spent with SNAP, \$1.50 goes back into Oregon's economy. As a local grocery business, we see this impact everyday, and this is true in every corner of our state — in rural, urban, and suburban communities alike. Food for All Oregonians provides Oregon lawmakers with an opportunity to make sure no child goes hungry. And yet, today, 1 in 6 children in Oregon don't have enough food to eat. This is unacceptable. Food assistance policies that continue to exclude thousands of Oregonians from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (sometimes called "SNAP" or "food stamps"), exclude people who are essential to sustaining food production, childcare, healthcare institutions, education, transportation, and other critical services throughout the state. Medford Food Co-op owners and shoppers prioritize community food systems, and here in Southern Oregon, agriculture plays a pivotal and vibrant role in our local economy. Local farm workers are absolutely essential to the farms and ranches that supply goods to the Co-op. And yet, people working in agriculture tend to be some of the lowest paid workers in the U.S. As a result, the hands that feed us struggle to feed their own families. All tax-paying farm workers should be able to afford the food they are so instrumental in growing, regardless of their immigration status. 945 S Riverside Ave Medford, OR 97501 (541) 779-2667 medfordfood.coop Medford Food Co-op supports SB611 because food pantries across the state are confronting record-breaking levels of demand, and barriers to nutritious food weaken Oregon's economy, destabilize communities, and strain critical systems. Since the pandemic, MFC has seen a significant increase in SNAP usage, and steady use of the Double Up Food Bucks program. Food for All Oregonians will help provide equitable access

for our diligent agricultural workers, and ensure all families in Southern Oregon can put food on the table. Please support SB 611. Thank you, Halle Riddlebarger
Outreach Manager Medford Food Co-op Medford, Oregon