

Submitter: Blanca Padilla
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB611

My name is Blanca, and I live in Medford, Oregon. As a parent of two children who were born and raised here in the Rogue Valley, Oregon is my home. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 611, Food For All Oregonians, which would ensure that all youth and elderly Oregonians, regardless of immigration status, have access to the food they need to stay healthy and thrive. I am deeply committed to this cause not only as a parent but as someone who experienced food insecurity as a child. I remember vividly when the 2008 recession hit and my family relied on food banks and churches just to get by. I would watch my parents struggle with the constant worry of whether they could pay the rent or whether we'd need to make another trip to the food bank to ensure we had something on our plates. As a Latinx family, the food provided at local pantries often didn't meet our cultural needs, but that wasn't our biggest challenge. As children of immigrants, my parents were afraid to seek help due to their immigration status. They feared the possibility of retaliation, and were unable to apply for food stamps because of that fear. I'm sure there are thousands of immigrant families in Oregon who share this same story—families who are struggling to make ends meet, sacrificing food so that they can pay the rent, and going to bed hungry because of it. Oregon is in the midst of a hunger crisis. One in six children in Oregon don't have enough to eat, and one-third more Oregonians are facing hunger than before the COVID-19 pandemic. Food pantries across the state are seeing record-breaking demand—the Oregon Food Bank is experiencing the highest levels of need in its 40+ year history. Despite paying billions in taxes each year, immigrant Oregonians are twice as likely to experience hunger and poverty compared to others. And too many are excluded from vital food assistance due to their immigration status. These are our neighbors, our coworkers, our children's friends—the people who help make Oregon the beautiful state it is. Access to food should not depend on where we were born. We need an Oregon where no one has to choose between paying the rent or feeding their family. SB 611, Food For All Oregonians, would help low-income youth and elderly Oregonians—many of whom are excluded from SNAP benefits simply because of their immigration status—gain access to the food they need. This bill builds on successful, community-driven navigator models, ensuring that trust is built and safety is prioritized within immigrant communities. When everyone has access to food, we all benefit. Kids do better in school, families are healthier, and our economy thrives with the support of local businesses. This is true for all corners of Oregon—urban, rural, and suburban alike. When all of our neighbors are fed, Oregon as a whole thrives. I urge you to support SB 611 and help make Oregon where everyone has the food they need to live healthy, happy lives.