

Submitter: Sienna Kaske
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006
TO: Joint Ways & Means Committee
SUBJECT: Yes on Food for All Oregonians (SB 611)

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, Vice-Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sienna and I live in North Portland. I am a doula, neighbor, daughter, and passionate about food justice. I am writing in strong support of Food For All Oregonians (Senate Bill 611) which would ensure Youth and Elder Oregonians, regardless of immigration status, have access to the food they need to keep them and their families healthy. Despite paying billions in annual taxes in Oregon, immigrant Oregonians are twice as likely to face hunger and poverty in our state. Thousands of immigrant and refugee Oregonians are excluded from vital food assistance due to their immigration status.

I am the granddaughter of farmworkers and firmly believe that everyone has a right to food, especially those who pick the food that we all eat. For far too long, immigrant Oregonians have been left out of crucial safety net programs, like SNAP, that support our communities overall wellbeing. In college, I was eligible for SNAP, and it was a life-saving program that helped me get my education. Some of my peers and friends were unable to access SNAP due to immigration status and I saw how that impacted their education.

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 seen this level of urgent need in its 40+ years of food banking.

These are our neighbors, our family, our friends, the children our kids play with, our coworkers and their loved ones– the people who help make Oregon a beautiful place to live. Access to food should not depend on where we were born. I urge you to envision an Oregon where anyone who needs food can get it.

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. Food for All will build on successful, community-driven navigator models to ensure trust and

community safety.

We know that when we all have access to food, we're all better off. Kids do better in school, our families' health and well-being improves, and our economy thrives through the support of local businesses. This is true in every corner of Oregon—in rural, urban, and suburban communities alike. When all of our neighbors are getting the food that they need, all of Oregon thrives.

This is why I am urging you to include SB 611 in Oregon's budget. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Sienna Kaske