



## Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 611

Submitted by: ARISE and Shine

Date: March 24, 2025

To: Honorable Members of the Committee

On behalf of ARISE and Shine, a community-rooted organization dedicated to equity, food justice, and the empowerment of immigrant and refugee families, we write to express our strongest and most heartfelt support for Senate Bill 611 – Food for All Oregonians.

At ARISE and Shine, we serve individuals and families who are deeply woven into the fabric of Oregon's economy. They work in agriculture, food processing, construction, hospitality, elder care, and janitorial services, jobs that are essential yet too often invisible. They harvest the produce, clean our schools and hospitals, prepare meals in restaurants, and provide care to the most vulnerable among us. These are the hands that help Oregon rise every single day.

And yet, because of immigration status, many of these individuals are shut out of the very systems meant to protect them, like food assistance.

We have walked beside:

- An immigrant grandmother who raises her grandchildren on a limited income, but is denied SNAP because of her status.
- A single undocumented mother of three who cleans homes by day and prepares food in restaurants by night, yet still skips meals to feed her children.
- An elder who fled war, found safety here, worked for decades, and now faces his final years with hunger and uncertainty.

This is unacceptable. This is unjust.

Senate Bill 611 isn't just a bill, it is a turning point. It is Oregon's opportunity to lead with compassion, to prioritize dignity, and to finally recognize that food is not a reward for citizenship, it is a human right.

The economic impact is also undeniable. Every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates up to \$1.50 in economic activity. SNAP dollars circulate quickly, supporting local farmers, grocers, food producers, and workers. This bill would not only feed people, it would strengthen Oregon's

economy from the ground up.

To deny people food because of where they were born is not only morally wrong, it is economically short-sighted. If we want a resilient, thriving Oregon, we must invest in all of our people. Because the health and success of our state depends on every individual having the food they need to survive and contribute.

### Community Testimonials:

*"I work. I pay taxes. I feed others. But at night, I go home and wonder if my children will eat tomorrow. This bill gives us hope."*

*"I spent my younger years building homes and bridges across this state. Now I'm retired, and I live on a fixed income. I never thought I'd be choosing between food and medicine. It's painful to feel forgotten." - Retired Elder*

*"I work in the fields, picking crops in the heat, in the rain. I make sure food reaches other families. But my own family often goes to bed hungry. We deserve to eat too." - Farmworker*

*"I pour concrete, I frame houses, I help build Oregon from the ground up. But after work, I go home to an empty kitchen. I'm not asking for luxury—just a chance to eat with dignity." - Construction Worker*

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**We urge this committee to honor that hope. To pass SB 611.  
To act with courage, compassion, and clarity.**

**Because food is life. And no one should be denied the right to live.**

Respectfully submitted,

**ARISE and Shine**

**Safari Leo Ndongwa**

**Founder/ Executive Director**