

Submitter: Bea Johnson  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB611

My Name is Bea Johnson, my husband and I own Sunbow Produce, an organic produce business in Corvallis. We are in strong support of Senate Bill 611 because we believe all Oregonians deserve to have access to nutritious food. My testimony is about my own experience as an immigrant.

My parents made the decision to move our family to the US after my 5 year old brother was killed in our home country. My father had been working in the US at the time of the incident and due to her grief, my mom was not able to take care of me and my surviving brother. In order to not lose his job, my dad moved all of us to the town where he had been working. Regardless of the pain they were in, my parents worked hard to make sure we had a place to live and food on the table. Food became a vessel for love in our family. They did the best they could given the circumstances but there were times when it was difficult to make ends meet. Fortunately, there were kind people in our community, who helped us sign up for commodity food boxes. Even though the food was foreign to us, I remember being excited to try something new. Having regular access to food meant my parents were less stressed. As an adult, looking back at this, I can only imagine how it felt to have that safety net for our family. It was never an issue of not being able to find work, it was an issue of not being paid enough. This resulted in both of my parents working as much as they could.

We all know that families are stronger when parents have time to be with their children and elders are present in the home. Children are more successful in school when they feel safe, are well fed and have a stable place to live. Humanity is stronger when we support each other. While I do not support the exploitation of immigrants in the larger food system, I do support a social system that attempts to mitigate that exploitation.

I support SB 611 as a fellow immigrant and now naturalized citizen of the United States. I write this in solidarity for all of the families who cannot make enough income working multiple jobs to pay their bills and feed their families. I write this in support of the elderly who cannot find work or are unable to work enough hours to make ends meet. I write this in support of the little girls and boys in our state who grew up like I did, in a lonely household with absent parents. I write this in support of those parents who don't get to experience the joy of playing with their children, going to school plays, watching sporting events or science fairs because they can't get the time off from work. The least we can do is make sure there's access to food so that food can

be a vessel of love for them like it was for me.