

TO: Senate Committee on Human Services  
FROM: Andrea Williams, President  
RE: Support for Food for All Oregonians (SB 611)  
DATE: March 25, 2025



Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and members of the committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes... *because no one should be hungry*. Yet, one third more Oregonians experience hunger today than before the pandemic. Last year, we saw 2.5 million visits to our network of over 1,200 food assistance sites through the Oregon Food Bank Network - a 31% increase from the previous year.

### **Oregon Food Bank Strongly Supports SB 611, Food for All Oregonians**

We believe everyone in Oregon should have access to food, no matter where we were born. We envision an Oregon, and a country, with an equitable and just immigration system that ensures immigration status does not perpetuate poverty or limits access to critical support like food assistance. Yet there is a direct line between inequities in our immigration and public benefits systems and the fact that Oregonians who are Latinx experience hunger at nearly twice the rate than Oregonians who are White<sup>1</sup>.

### **Background**

We are here today because we have an opportunity to do something about this. SB 611 – the Food for All Oregonians bill – is built to address barriers faced by Oregonians with lived experiences of food insecurity and the immigration system. In designing this bill, the Steering Committee of Food for All Oregonians (of which Oregon Food Bank is a part) partnered in 2022 with immigrant, refugee and COFA-led organizations to reach over 400 community members in 13 Oregon counties in 16 languages through listening circles and surveys. Researchers from Oregon State University (OSU) helped analyze results that informed the design of SB 611.

What we heard loud and clear was that far too many Oregonians face unnecessary barriers to accessing food. These barriers include limitations on eligibility for food assistance programs, language access, limitations of emergency food options and the feeling of dignity when asking for help. Our communities spoke, and together we co-created SB 611.

Oregon Food Bank knows from decades of firsthand experience that food banking alone will never solve hunger. We often say we would love nothing more than to work ourselves out of a job. Enacting SB 611 would move us one step closer to that goal.

<sup>1</sup>[https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/2024-11/Oregon\\_Food\\_Insecurity\\_Rates\\_2021-2023\\_november\\_2024.pdf](https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/2024-11/Oregon_Food_Insecurity_Rates_2021-2023_november_2024.pdf)

Oregon Food Bank  
Headquarters /  
Metro Services  
7900 NE 33rd Drive  
Portland, OR 97211  
503-282-0555

Oregon Food Bank  
Washington County  
Services  
1870 NW 173rd Ave  
Beaverton, OR 97006  
503-439-6510

Oregon Food Bank  
Tillamook County  
Services  
PO Box 1344  
Tillamook, OR 97141  
503-842-3154

Oregon Food Bank  
Southeast Oregon  
Services  
773 S Oregon Street  
Ontario, OR 97914  
541-889-9206

Columbia Gorge  
Food Bank  
3610 Crates Way  
The Dalles, OR 97058  
541-370-2333

**FEED THE  
HUMAN  
SPIRIT**

## **SB 611 ensures access to food, no matter where we were born**

SB 611 will make food assistance available to Oregonians who are currently excluded from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food benefits due to immigration status - starting with youth and elders (0-25; 55+). This includes lawful permanent residents under the “5-year bar,” participants in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, people with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Oregonians who are undocumented and people in the process of seeking asylum. In total, we estimate that tens of thousands of Oregonians are excluded from SNAP due to these exclusions.

Oregonians who are immigrants make our communities stronger. Community members who are excluded from SNAP are kids, parents, grandparents, college students, entrepreneurs, taxpayers and workers in areas including food production, health care and education. The American Immigration Council found that Oregonians who are immigrants contribute \$5.6 billion annually in taxes<sup>2</sup>, yet tens of thousands are excluded from assistance in times of need.

While SNAP is a federal program, Food for All Oregonians is a state-funded and state-managed initiative that will mirror the federal SNAP program - following the same benefits and eligibility criteria as SNAP.

Food for All Oregonians will also make applying for benefits more culturally-responsive and welcoming by supporting a community navigator program. Community navigation is a highly successful model to ensure that everyone feels safe and supported while asking for assistance. SB 611 also takes steps to make the process of applying for food assistance more welcoming, whether online, with a community navigator, or at an office of the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS).

The bill recognizes the need for strong protections for applicants and participants to ensure the safety and confidentiality of community members participating in Food For All Oregonians. The bill reiterates that all existing Oregon laws relating to the protection of information regarding immigration status of participants must be followed. Enrolling in Food for All Oregonians does not put participating Oregonians at risk of federal rules relating to “public charge.”

Currently, five other states use state funding to confer SNAP-like benefits to people who are excluded based on immigration status: California, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, and Washington<sup>3</sup>. Oregon is currently the only state on the West Coast that does not have such a benefit. Together we are here to change that.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/map-the-impact/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.nilc.org/resources/state\\_food/](https://www.nilc.org/resources/state_food/)



## SNAP Helps Kids, Seniors, and Families Thrive - SB 611 Extends These Benefits

SB 611 focuses food benefits on kids and elders. Nearly 50 years of research consistently shows that kids who live in households that participate in SNAP have better outcomes related to Homelessness Prevention, Education and Early Learning, Job Retention, Health Equity and Behavioral Health<sup>4</sup>. This includes specific benefits for kids and elders:

### Benefits to Kids

- Participating in SNAP reduces food insecurity among kids by one third after their families receive SNAP benefits for six months.
- People who participate in SNAP while pregnant are less likely to give birth to low birth weight babies.
- Participating in SNAP makes kids less likely to be in poor health and be underweight.
- A recent study of kids who are immigrants finds that one additional year of SNAP eligibility early in life is correlated with positive health outcomes later in childhood.
- Participating in SNAP reduces the likelihood that a child will experience chronic absenteeism or drop out of school.
- Participating in SNAP can lead to improvements in math and reading, and increases the chance of graduating from high school by as much as 18 percentage points.
- Adults who were in households participating in SNAP as kids report better health and economic outcomes as adults.
- Participating in SNAP for just six months reduces the likelihood that a household will be evicted.

However, kids in Oregon who are excluded from SNAP do not currently have access to these benefits and experience hunger at higher rates. The experience of hunger and food insecurity for a child is not merely about the temporary sensation of your stomach growling. It's an experience of trauma. And it exists in the context of the sum of the traumas that happen when you're experiencing poverty. It can mean the stress of not knowing if you'll be able to sleep in your bed or stay at your same school if your family is evicted. It can mean living with the stress of a parent who sacrifices their meals so that you can eat. It can mean adverse health outcomes when families stretch budgets by purchasing food that is less expensive but perhaps with fewer fruits and vegetables. It can mean living with the toxic stress that is inevitable when your parents are working multiple jobs at irregular hours while worrying about how to make rent and pay the bills each month.

The impacts of this trauma can last a lifetime. Experiencing toxic stress related to food insecurity and poverty at an early age leads to early onset of chronic diseases, a decrease in lifetime education and earnings, an increase in depression and even suicide ideation.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/152022>



## Benefits to Seniors

- People who lack consistent access to adequate food spend roughly 45% more on medical care.<sup>5</sup>
- Seniors who participate in SNAP are less likely to cut down on purchasing medication.
- Food-insecure seniors who participate in SNAP are **46 percent less likely to be hospitalized** than non-participating, low-income seniors.
- One study of older adults in Maryland found that SNAP participants are **23 percent less likely to enter a nursing home** than non-participants the year after receiving benefits<sup>6</sup>.

First and foremost, the impact of hunger and poverty robs each individual of their full potential to flourish. It also harms all of us. Bread for the World estimates that the health-related costs of food insecurity and hunger are a staggering \$160 billion every year in the United States<sup>7</sup>.

## SB 611 Supports Local Economies in Oregon

While Oregon Food Bank's primary reason for supporting SB 611 is because it will move us closer to the goal of ending hunger in Oregon, it's worth noting that SB 611 will also create meaningful economic benefits throughout our state. **Each dollar spent by a family on SNAP leads to \$1.50 to \$2.00 increase in economic activity.**<sup>8</sup> There are 3,484 Oregon retailers across the state authorized to accept SNAP.<sup>9</sup> Each dollar spent supports jobs in grocery stores, farmers and food producers and workers throughout the supply chain. SB 611 is a big win-win.

## Our Campaign

We would like to recognize the outstanding leadership of the Food For All Oregonians Steering Committee, including Adelante Mujeres, Afghan Support Network, APANO, Micronesian Islander Community, Oregon Food Bank, Oregon Latino Health Coalition, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon, PCUN, Plaza de Nuestra Comunidad, and Unite Oregon.

As of this writing, more than 180 organizations and businesses across our state have endorsed Food for All Oregonians, and SB 611 has bipartisan support from 22 legislative Chief and Regular Sponsors.

We urge support for SB 611 to help get Oregon closer to the goal of ending hunger for good.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-is-linked-with-improved-health-outcomes-and-lower-health-care-costs>

<sup>6</sup> <https://bmcgeriatr.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12877-017-0553-x>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.hungerreport.org/costofhunger/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/laserfiche/publications/93529/ERR-265.pdf?v=67472>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/data-research/data-visualization/snap-retailer-management-dashboard>

