

Submitter: Peyton Nguyen  
On Behalf Of: SB 611  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Growing up, hunger wasn't an abstract concept; it was a daily reality. The gnawing emptiness in my stomach, the constant worry about where the next meal would come from – these were the hallmarks of my childhood. Food stamps were not a safety net; they were a lifeline, often stretched to its breaking point. This experience wasn't just about physical discomfort; it was about the constant, underlying anxiety that permeated every aspect of my life. I understand firsthand the crushing weight of food insecurity. I know the feeling of a parent's desperate attempt to mask their own fear while trying to provide for their children. I know the shame that comes with needing assistance, a shame that society often unjustly imposes. However, I am not here today to simply recount hardship. I am here because those experiences ignited within me an unwavering determination to create change. They fueled a fire within me, a conviction that no one should have to endure the same struggles I faced.

My story, and the stories of countless others like mine, are not just anecdotes. They are a call to action. They are a testament to the urgent need for policies that prioritize food security and economic justice. We must move beyond temporary fixes and address the root causes of hunger. We must ensure that access to nutritious food is not a privilege, but a fundamental right for every Oregonian. My own experiences with food insecurity, growing up relying on food assistance, have given me a deep understanding of the critical need for programs like the one SB 611 aims to establish. I know firsthand the anxiety and hardship that comes with not knowing where your next meal will come from. SB 611's goal of providing state-funded food assistance to Oregon youth (ages 0 to 25) and elders (ages 55+) who are currently excluded from federal SNAP benefits due to their immigration status is not just a policy proposal; it's a moral imperative.

Here's why I believe SB 611 is essential:

#### Addressing a Critical Gap:

This bill directly addresses the unjust exclusion of vulnerable Oregonians from vital food assistance programs.

It recognizes that everyone, regardless of their immigration status, deserves access to nutritious food.

#### Supporting Vulnerable Populations:

By focusing on youth and elders, SB 611 targets those who are often the most susceptible to the negative impacts of food insecurity.

This will help to create healthier outcomes for these valuable members of our community.

Strengthening Our Communities:

Ensuring that everyone has access to food strengthens our communities as a whole. When people are fed, they are better able to contribute to the economic health of the state.

Aligning with Oregon Values:

Oregon is a state that values inclusivity and compassion. SB 611 reflects those values by extending a helping hand to those who need it most.

My personal experience has shown me that food assistance is not just about providing meals; it's about providing hope and stability. SB 611 has the potential to transform the lives of countless Oregonians, allowing them to thrive and contribute to our state's prosperity.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 611 and take a crucial step towards creating a more just and equitable Oregon. Thank you.