

Submitter: Darlene Zimbardi
On Behalf Of: Food for All Oregonians
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 Darlene Zimbardi and I live in Southeast Portland, I am a former public school ESL teacher and a volunteer for the Oregon Food Bank. 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.

When I taught in the Oregon Public School system, many of our students relied on the food bank. I am thankful that Oregon had such an important system in place for our students, many who were immigrants, like my Italian grandparents and my husband's Japanese grandfather. My husband and I are on a fixed income, I had to retire early due to a chronic illness and we are concerned that we too might need the benefits that Food for All provides in the future.

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.

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,
Darlene Zimbard
Portland, OR