

Dear Senate Committee on Health Care:

I am an Oregon resident and Registered Dietitian Nutritionist living and practicing in NE Portland. I have worked in an inpatient hospital for 4 years and I am writing to express opposition to HB 3342, a bill that will mandate that certain healthcare and correctional facilities to provide plant-based meal options for their patients and residents.

I want to begin by saying I think you'd be hard-pressed to find a dietitian anywhere in this state who doesn't believe in the healing power of a plant based diet. Mounds of research show myriad benefits to consuming a diet that is primarily comprised of whole, minimally processed plant foods and my goal with SO many of my patients is to increase intake of these kinds of foods. I do, however, strongly oppose this proposed mandate for 3 main reasons:

- 1. The definition of "plant based meal" is not clearly defined, nor is what constitutes a COMPLETE meal in this category.**
- 2. There is no scientific evidence suggesting that merely offering plant-based meal options will lead to ANY measurable change in health status. The foods have to be whole and nutrient-dense, and the patient or resident has to choose to eat it.**
- 3. The potential costs and food waste that this bill may impose on institutions — particularly corrections facilities — is a senseless use of already limited resources.**

There is no clear definition of what a plant-based diet is, but perhaps what is more concerning is the lack of addressing WHAT constitutes a **complete** "plant-based" meal. If we're operating under the assumption that a plant-based diet is a vegan diet — void of all animal products and animal byproducts — then what will constitute the nutritional breakdown of a complete vegan meal in a correctional institution? Who will decide the percentage of carbohydrates, proteins, and fat? Who will make sure there are foods fortified with vitamin B12 and vitamin D to prevent the development of nutrient deficiencies while they're relying on the institution to provide a nutritionally complete diet? Are you aware that a processed veggie hot dog and Oreos is considered plant-based and vegan? Strict regulations regarding the nutritional adequacy of meals provided in these institutions are already in place. Adding additional mandates without fully considering the complexities of providing such a meal is irresponsible. In order for this bill to make sense and have the positive health impact that is hoped for, it should be VERY clear what types of foods are allowed to be considered to meet the mandate's requirements. Unfortunately the types of plant-based foods that DO have a strong positive impact on health may require additional cost to the institution in which case this should be thoughtfully considered, too. Currently the bill states that it will have no fiscal impact and I think this is very

misleading. I do not want my hard earned tax dollars to pay for an inmate to eat a vegan protein shake full of sugar and processed soy protein and call that a plant-based diet.

This brings me to my second point. I believe the purpose of this bill is to somehow influence more people to eat more fruits and vegetables — That intention is wonderful. However, good intentions do not replace the need for solid, scientific evidence. Simply offering a vegan meal will not influence the behavior of the residents and patients in these facilities. The notion that it will is ignoring decades of research on behavioral psychology. Just because you put a vegetable, or veggie dog made of soy protein isolate, in front of someone does not mean they're going to eat it. Plain and simple. To create a mandate like this responsibly, it would be a good idea to have concrete data supporting that it will in fact do what it is set up to do. Otherwise it's just a waste of our legislative power.

This brings me to my final point — in the case that these meals are not eaten, what happens to the food? Certain long-term care facilities that have limited vegan meal options are run that way because their patients/residents don't want those foods and you cannot force someone to eat a healthy diet. In a correctional facility where a vegan option is served at every meal— what happens to the food when the inmates are not choosing it? Food waste is already a huge problem in our state and our country and I don't think the way this bill is written adequately addresses the potential for increased cost and waste.

It is no secret that our communities need to eat more plant-rich diets, but HB 3342 is NOT how we will make that happen and I urge you to vote against the passing of this bill. Thank you so much for considering my position on this very important issue. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you'd like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Ansley Hill, RDN, LD