

May 1, 2019

Oregon State Legislature
Senate Health Care Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: *House Bill 3342 – Plant-based Meals*

Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Senate Health Care Committee:

On behalf of Oregon’s 62 community hospitals and the patients they serve, the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (OAHHS) is neutral on HB 3342 which requires hospitals to provide plant-based, or vegan, pending final amendments.

Hospitals comply with extensive food and dietary regulations under the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, as well as accreditation entities such as the Joint Commission. Under these regulations, hospitals are required to have qualified dietitians, who are trained in the science of nutrition, to supervise the nutritional aspects of patient care.

Hospital dietitians are required to develop menus to meet the nutritional needs of patients in accordance with recognized dietary practices, such as the US Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Center or the Institute of Medicine Food and Nutrition Board’s Dietary Reference Intakes.

Hospitals are also required under the Joint Commission to accommodate cultural, religious or ethnic food preferences, unless contraindicated. The ‘unless contraindicated’ component of this regulation is important, as physicians need the ability to assess when a treatment or diet may be doing more harm than good. California recently passed a vegan-meal mandate, but the law states plant-based meals must “meet the needs of patients in accordance with their physicians’ orders”.

OAHHS supports the adoption of an amendment that clearly defines the role of a physician in making medically necessary decisions around a patient’s diet.

Sincerely,

Travis Meuwissen
Director of Advocacy
Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems