

Dear House Committee on Human Services,

As a plant based Registered Dietitian, holding a Master's Degree in Nutrition Science, I appreciate the intention behind HB2348. Yes, it would be great if all people ate more plants (as close to their natural state as possible most times). However, during critical illness or times of not feeling well most people suffer reduced appetite and less interest in food. In acute care hospitals it is well established that a minimum of 30% of our patients suffer moderate to severe malnutrition. Registered Dietitians manage medical nutrition therapy for hospitalized and care home patients, we need them to eat adequately to improve both health outcomes and quality of life.

I currently lead a phenomenal team of 44 Registered Dietitians at an adult and pediatric hospital caring for the many of the sickest patients in Oregon. Our children living with cancer (and adults!) will sometimes only eat a few bites of hot dog or bacon (due to their chemo/radiation induced taste alterations). Our Cystic Fibrosis patients need an abundance of calories and fat to provide the energy they need to breathe (they tend to love bacon too!). Our patients, regardless of diagnosis, deserve the right to select what they want to eat.

At my current and past acute care hospitals (both located in Portland, Oregon and managed with the belief that food is medicine), it is currently easy for a vegetarian or vegan patient to order and receive delicious and nourishing plant based meals. I fear that many facilities will substitute processed meats with highly processed salt and sugar laden packaged meat alternative products (to meet this bill and internal budgetary requirements). These products are not healthful foods, and similar to processed meats should be only occasionally selected as part of an overall intake. I cannot speak to the food provided in Oregon Correctional Facilities, during my experience in California many meals were already plant based due to the very low funding available for feeding incarcerated persons.

I would strongly encourage and support the efforts behind this bill being transferred to an assertive public health campaign encouraging plant based intake. Teaching the value of whole foods such as grains, nuts, legumes, beans and generous helpings of fruits and vegetables will improve the health of all Oregonians.

The statements above are my own.

Thank you and stay well,
Irene Boyle Franklin, MS, RD, LD
Registered Dietitian
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