

A Bill To Ensure Plant-Based Meals for Hospital Patients

Hospitals do more than restoring health and saving lives. By encouraging healthful behaviors, they also play key roles in preventing illness. Nonsmoking policies, which have been routine in hospitals for decades, model a healthful behavior that patients can emulate. The same is true for nutrition. Many of our most serious conditions—heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and some forms of cancer—are strongly influenced by food choices. When patients learn about healthful eating in the hospital, they bring these healthful habits home to their families.

In 2017, the American Medical Association called on U.S. hospitals to provide healthful plant-based meals. If implemented widely, this policy would allow hospitals to serve as role models for health and nutrition.

HB 2348 calls on Oregon hospitals to make plant-based meal options available to patients upon request.¹ A large body of peer-reviewed research shows that the illnesses responsible for many hospital visits often can be prevented, treated, and even reversed with plant-based diets, which are low in saturated fat and cholesterol and high in fiber, nutrients, and vitamins.



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of Oregonians suffer from one or more chronic conditions including cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, heart attack, and stroke.²

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Oregon adults have diabetes, a condition that costs
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individuals may have prediabetes.⁵

The vast majority of Oregon hospitals and long-term care facilities already offer a plant-based meal option, so applying this standard is reasonable and will ensure equitable access for all Oregonians. The bill also calls on long-term care facilities and correctional facilities to serve plant-based meals. The Oregon Department of Corrections has been able to offer plant-based meals with existing resources, meaning there is no fiscal impact.

HB 2348

- Ensures plant-based meal options are available in hospitals, long-term care facilities, and prisons
- Makes plant-based options more accessible by including them on menus
- Allows people to make healthier choices and provides opportunities for education

Why This Bill Is Needed

More than 53% of Oregonians suffer from one or more chronic conditions including cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, heart attack, and stroke, according to the Oregon Health Authority.² These conditions are also leading COVID-19 comorbidities.³ More than 40,000 people in Oregon went to the hospital emergency department for heart disease, heart attack, stroke, diabetes, or colorectal cancer in 2017.⁴

Approximately 287,000 Oregon adults have diabetes, a condition that costs \$2.2 billion annually to treat. About 1.1 million individuals may have prediabetes.⁵

Research shows that a plant-based diet helps fight cardiovascular disease,⁶ diabetes,⁷ and certain cancers.⁸

“Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables can help protect against many serious and costly chronic diseases, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, and obesity,” according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In Oregon, only 13% of adults meet the daily recommended fruit intake, and only 12% meet the daily recommended vegetable intake according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.⁹

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Support for Plant-Based Hospital Meals

The American Medical Association passed the Healthful Food Options in Health Care Facilities H-150.949 resolution, which “calls on all Health Care Facilities to improve the health of patients, staff, and visitors by providing a variety of healthy food, including plant-based meals, and meals that are low in saturated and trans fat, sodium, and added sugars.”¹⁰

The American College of Cardiology made a similar recommendation in Planting a Seed: Heart-Healthy Food Recommendations for Hospitals, which recommends that “at least one plant-based main dish that is low in fat, sodium, and added sugars will be offered and promoted at every meal.”¹¹

HB 2348 provides CHOICE to Oregonians in institutional care settings.

Please vote YES on HB 2348.

References

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Founded in 1985, the **Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine** is a nonprofit organization that promotes preventive medicine, conducts clinical research, and encourages higher standards for ethics and effectiveness in education and research.

The Physicians Committee has more than 175,000 members worldwide, including 1,700 members in Oregon.