

I am in strong opposition of HB2348. I am the Clinical Nutrition Supervisor of a Portland-area hospital, and a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. We are always committed to providing healthy, balanced food options to all of our patients. We also accommodate all dietary preferences, food allergies, and religious food restrictions. We always provide balanced meals to our vegan patients, and if we are not able to accommodate their particular preferences with the vegan meal items that we have available, we will go to the store or special-order food to prepare for them. We also have a number of vegan food and beverage choices available in the cafeteria for guests.

The fact is that this bill is aiming to limit the food choices available to other non-vegan patients and guests, stating that we would not be able to serve any "processed" meat. This would eliminate nearly all the meat that is served in all hospitals, and place undue burden of cost on the food service departments, who are already struggling to stay afloat after having lost much of our business due to COVID restrictions. Additionally, most of the patients we see are elderly and many are malnourished. Often, the only foods that they will even eat while in the hospital are comfort foods such as breakfast meats, sweets, and starchy foods. All patients should have the option to eat according to preference.

Perhaps the most alarming component of the bill is the part that insists that the hospital must provide "Low fat" vegan options. It has been well-established that low fat diets are not healthy, and require cutting down or eliminating even healthy plant-based fats from the diet.

Perhaps the most relevant point is the fact that we simply do not have a lot of vegan patients, staff or visitors. Again, we do always have vegan options available for these individuals. However, requiring the expansion of our vegan food options will result in nothing more than increased cost and increased food waste. Additionally, it would cost tens of thousands of dollars to modify and reprint our paper menus to print full vegan meal options on all menus. We could certainly create a separate vegan and vegetarian paper menu. However, we have Patient dining assistants who help our patients with their meal orders, and are trained to help select foods within their particular dietary restrictions.