

To: The House Committee on Human Services  
Regarding: Support for House Bill 2348  
March 17, 2021

Dear Chair Williams and members of the Committee:

I am very interested in the outcome of the House Committee on Human Services discussion of whether to move the HB2348 proposal forward. My wife and I are both on a committee formed last year to try to assist residents and potential residents of continuing care communities to be able to obtain appropriate food when they have chosen a plant based diet. We don't want to go into the multiple reasons here but the choice is very science based and reflective of currently evolving nutritional awareness supported by many medical professionals and hospital systems such as Kaiser, where we are enrolled.

We got involved into the issue of plant based food availability because a very dear friend had to enter an extended care facility and found that her food selection was severely limited by her request for plant based foods. In her case it was possible to help her negotiate for more palatable options, but the revised policy for her wasn't extended to other patients to give them the same choice.

We see the plant based trend as a permanent and rapidly growing change that will become increasingly necessary with an increasing human population. This issue should be considered a matter of patient rights to be able to accommodate food choices made very conscientiously by the residents, who often don't have adequate information about what will be available to them before entering facilities affected by this measure.

In regard to comments made during the March 17 hearing on the proposal, I disagree that this requirement should be considered as "telling people what to do" or imposing dietary restrictions on anyone. The issue is that patients and residents of facilities where they must remain for extended periods are not offered adequate selections for their chosen diet. In the same way that meat eaters expect to be accommodated with free choice, vegans and vegetarians wish to be offered nutritious and palatable meals consistent with their health needs and ethics. There are many rapidly growing BIPOC groups advocating plant based today, and there is certainly rapidly increasing advocacy from health care professionals and organizations. Plant based foods are a universally accepted common denominator for everyone. All this bill is calling for is to provide foods without animal ingredients to those requesting the option.

We also point out that a similar measures were successfully passed in New York and California with the backing of many health based organizations. Oregon should also continue to lead in ensuring health and human rights. We ask that you support HB 2348 and provide Oregonians with increased access to healthy food choices.

Sincerely,

Keith Iding and Stephanie Lucas,  
Portland, Oregon