



HB 2536 - Public Hearing
Senate Committee on Education
Written Testimony

- Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,
- For the record, my name is Ricki Ruiz, State Representative to House District 50 - which encompasses Gresham, SE Portland, and the indigenous lands of Chinook & Cowlitz tribes.
- As a Chief Sponsor of House Bill 2536, I urge your support in voting this great policy out of committee, and help eliminate food insecurity in schools.
- I'd like to thank Representative Reardon, and all House members who contributed to this bill passing the Oregon House of Representatives unanimously.
 - Oregonians know we prioritize our students when we can put aside differences and stand behind great policies.
- While this is a technical fix that opts all schools into the expanded Free & Reduced Lunch eligibility, this bill will make a difference to the hundreds of students having their learning interrupted due to food insecurity.
- It wasn't too long ago that my sister and I were in elementary school. Being the son of hard working agricultural workers, my parents would work sun-up to sun-down.
 - This meant that as the eldest sibling, assumed the role of caretaker, cook and even tutor for my sister.
- While my family qualified for free & reduced lunch, the application process was tedious and confusing... I remember that during the weeks between submitting and getting our application approved, facing suspension for being caught stealing food from the school cafeteria.
 - My sister and I joined thousands of students who have their learning interrupted by avoidable issues such as food insecurity.
- Our schools must be safe havens, and actively work to provide comfortable learning environments for our students. HB 2536 is a logical next step in eliminating food insecurity from our schools, and I am looking forward to a broader conversation on how we can expand free and reduced lunch programs in schools, and rise to the needs of our students.
- I urge your support for House Bill 2536.