

Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Fahey, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Veronica Green. I live in Portland and am a Nutrition Services Lead at Portland Public Schools as well as a member of SEIU Local 503. I'm here to submit testimony in favor of House Bill 4157.

Nutrition Service workers, along with custodians, are among the lowest-paid workers in the Portland Public Schools district. These workers are, more often than in other fields, people of color and women.

When the pandemic first began, I can recall my colleagues and I having to continue working in-person to feed the district's students. Other than knowing that a contagious virus had begun spreading in our state, we really had no idea what was going on...how the virus was spread, what impacts it could have on our health, what we could do to protect ourselves, how long this was going to go on, or how this public health crisis would impact our ability to feed our own children.

Shortly after this, schools across the state began implementing distance learning. As a result, nutrition service employees had their hours cut significantly and thus were not receiving a full paycheck, if they were receiving one at all. We normally go for the entire summer without receiving pay, but we were not prepared for in-person learning to come to a halt and thus experienced added financial hardship.

As we all know, the pandemic continued to impact our way of life. The entirety of the 2020-2021 school year took place virtually. During the first half of the school year, I *was* able to work, but was receiving just 20% of my usual hours and thus was receiving a minimal paycheck. During the second half of the school year, I had to go on leave to stay home and watch over my two kids, Valentina and Julian, as they participated in distance learning from home. During this time, I *did* receive federal unemployment, but no financial support from the school district or state. As such, I had to go without my healthcare benefits for several months. It was during this time that I had to get a food box for the very first time in my life in order to make sure my kids didn't go to bed hungry.

Because school returned to being in-person this school year, I am back to working and helping my family make ends meet. Being out of work for an entire year did not come without its hardships, however, and I still feel like I'm playing catch up with my finances. Both my husband and I claimed the Earned Income Tax Credit on our 2020 tax returns, and it's my understanding that joint filers could receive up to \$1200 in direct payments because of this bill.

For my family and me, a \$1200 payment would make an incredibly meaningful difference especially at the beginning of Summer when I will once again return to being unemployed until the beginning of the next school year. If our family received this support from the State of Oregon, we would likely use it to cover a significant portion of our July rent. Other families of workers at Portland Public Schools could use this to pay for food to feed their families or bills to help keep their heads above water, for example.

Nutrition service employees have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to support Oregon students while their parents went back to work to pay the bills. Please consider supporting Oregon families like mine by voting "YES" on House Bill 4157 to help us make ends meet, too.

Thank you for your time,

Veronica Green.