



DATE: February 21, 2023  
FROM: Sammi Teo, Public Policy Advocate  
RE: Support for SB 426, Toxic Free Schools Act

---

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chairs Weber and Anderson, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today; and we advocate to change policies that drive hunger and poverty. We have the opportunity to rebuild and emerge stronger so that we can end hunger for good in our communities. This is our moment to embrace our shared values, care for each other and take bold action in support of *all* Oregonians.

### **Exposure to harmful pesticides creates health and economic disparities for kids.**

Ensuring each child grows up in a healthy environment is critical to building an Oregon where all of us can thrive. Yet many pesticides currently authorized for use on school grounds are linked to weakened immune systems, chronic illness, and learning disabilities. Children are at higher risk for long-term health effects from exposure to harmful pesticides than adults because their internal organs are still developing and maturing. Even in small amounts, pesticide exposures put children at high risk of adverse health effects. Children in historically disadvantaged, low-income communities, communities of color, or those with parents who work with chemicals for their job, already bear a disproportionate burden of increased exposure to harmful chemicals. Oregon's children should not have to worry about exposure to toxic chemicals in institutions meant to help them learn and grow.

The health of our children and communities directly impacts rates of poverty and food insecurity. Adverse health impacts have a wide range of economic consequences, such as increased medical costs and debt, or chronic health conditions that escalate barriers to work opportunities and affect one's long-term earning potential. According to an [Oregon Health Authority report](#) (2019), personal spending on health care is higher in Oregon than the national average. High healthcare costs jeopardize the financial stability of people in Oregon. The OHA report found that at least 60% of Chapter 7 and Chapter 12 bankruptcy filings in Oregon included medical debt. It also found that Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Oregonians were three times as likely to report using up their savings on medical bills as white Oregonians. Poor health has economic consequences that make it more difficult to disrupt cycles of poverty.

### **Oregon schools need targeted support in order to become safer learning spaces.**

The Toxic Free Schools Act (SB 426) will support Oregon schools in becoming safer learning environments and safer workplaces for their faculty and staff. Specifically, it will:

- Provide resources and technological assistance to school districts to reduce harmful pesticide use.
- Require a diverse Stakeholder Advisory Committee to help guide school Integrated Pest Management (IPM) planning to implement safer pesticide use practices.
- Modernize pesticide record-keeping processes and increase transparency for communities and parents/caregivers.
- Provide equitable pest management support for schools.

We urge you to support The Toxic Free Schools Act (SB 426). Thank you.

Oregon Food Bank  
Headquarters /  
Metro Services  
7900 NE 33rd Drive  
Portland, OR 97211  
503-282-0555

Oregon Food Bank  
Washington County  
Services  
1870 NW 173rd Ave  
Beaverton, OR 97006  
503-439-6510

Oregon Food Bank  
Tillamook County  
Services  
PO Box 1344  
Tillamook, OR 97141  
503-842-3154

Oregon Food Bank  
Southeast Oregon  
Services  
773 S Oregon Street  
Ontario, OR 97914  
541-889-9206

Columbia Gorge  
Food Bank  
3610 Crates Way  
The Dalles, OR 97058  
541-370-2333

