

Submitter: Melina Barker  
On Behalf Of: Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network  
Committee: House Committee On Education  
Measure: HB3030

To members of the House Committee On Education,

The Oregon Farm to School & School Garden Network (OFSSGN) supports Healthy School Meals for All. We are committed to working towards Oregon being a state where every student can access school breakfast and lunch at no charge to families helps ensure that all children have the nutrition they need to grow and thrive. Healthy School Meals for All improves educational, health, and economic outcomes for students. In addition, it reduces the stigma sometimes associated with school meals, advances racial equity, eliminates “school lunch debt,” and supports working parents. The 1,900 members of the Oregon Farm to School & School Garden Network have clearly expressed their support for Healthy School Meals for All. School nutrition professionals need more time to feed students high quality meals and less time with burdensome paperwork and billing processes.

Federal pandemic waivers made it possible for all schools to provide meals at no charge to all students, no matter their household income. Without these waivers, the alarming spikes in childhood hunger caused by the fallout of COVID-19 would have been even worse. But the waiver authorizing free school meals for all students expired in June 2022.

Oregon became a national leader in expanding access to school meals with the passage of the Hunger-Free Schools provisions in the Student Success Act. Oregon has doubled the number of schools offering breakfast and lunch at no charge to students compared to 2019, before the pandemic. Yet with the expiration of the waiver, 45% of Oregon schools no longer are able to provide this opportunity.

The pandemic served as a valuable lesson on the critical importance of providing healthy meals to all students. HB 3030 provides a pathway for Oregon to develop a solution. HB 3030 will:

Establish the “Healthy School Meals for All Task Force” to design and recommend a proposal to the legislature to make it viable for every school in Oregon to offer breakfast and lunch to all students at no charge to families; and

Take advantage of potential federal changes that would extend breakfast and lunch to all students at no charge by requiring Oregon to adapt to federal changes.

The Healthy School Meals for All Task Force will bring together critical stakeholders

to design a solution that is right for Oregon. HB 3030 puts Oregon on the pathway for Oregon to achieve Healthy School Meals for All for Oregon's students, and we urge its passage. The OFSSGN is committed to supporting Healthy School Meals for all and willing to dedicate capacity and resources to participate in the Task Force if HB 3030 is passed.

Sincerely,

Melina Barker

Director- Oregon Farm to School & School Garden Network