
March 15, 2023

Representative Neron, Chair
House Committee on Education
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of HB 3030-1, Healthy School Meals for All

Chair Neron, Vice-Chair Hudson, Vice-Chair Wright, and Members of the Committee:

We are writing to express support for HB 3030, with the -1 amendment, which would provide a pathway to establish Healthy School Meals for All.

Healthy School Meals for All — offering school breakfast and lunch to all students 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.

Federal pandemic waivers made it possible for all schools to provide meals at no charge to all students, regardless of household income. Without these waivers, the alarming spikes in childhood hunger caused by the fallout of COVID-19 would have been even worse. This 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 3030-1 provides a pathway for Oregon to develop a solution. The bill as amendment 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. We at Multnomah County support HB 3030 and ask that you take this critical step to address child hunger across the state and ensure our community has equitable access to meals.

Thank you,

Mohammad Bader, MS,LPC
Director
Department of County Human Services

Peggy Samolinski
Director
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