



To: House Education Committee

Re: HB 3030

Date: March 15, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Neron, and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Christina Bodamer, and I am the Oregon Government Relations Director for the American Heart Association here today in support of HB 3030.

Each day in the United States, nearly 30 million students receive lunch through the National School Lunch Program and more than 14 million students receive breakfast through the School Breakfast Program. Combined these two programs are essential nutrition assistance programs in the United States, second to only the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. For almost two decades, the American Heart Association along with other health and food security partners have advocated to improve the school meals program.

We support Healthy school meals for all because this policy:

- Ensures that all students get two free, healthy meals every school day, giving children the tools they need to succeed in school.
- Removes stigma of children participating in the program.
- Provides equitable access to healthy meals and levels the playing field.
- Reduces burdens on families.
- Ensures that children who might be on the edges of eligibility, or children who are experiencing homelessness, have recently immigrated, have caregivers who may struggle with administrative paperwork, or are in foster care do not fall through the cracks.
- Reduces administrative burden on school food service staff by streamlining and simplifying the program.
- Provides a steady budget for school food service programs so they may remain fiscally solvent.
- Eliminates unpaid meal balances.
- Removes draconian measures schools may take to feed children who cannot pay.
- Allows programs to focus on their primary function: feeding children healthy meals.
- Negates the need to stand in line to pay for meals, allowing children more time to eat and socialize.
- Solves the issue of figuring out how to have children pay if their meal is served in the classroom or are remote learning.
- Takes pressure off school food service programs to increase revenue by serving foods that may be lower in nutritional quality.

Data from the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) found that serving free meals to all kids improved attendance rates, improved grade promotion, and increased



participation in school lunch. It is reasonable to assume that healthy school meals for all could have the same positive impact.

Healthy school meals for all makes sure that no children – particularly our most vulnerable children and children who are on the line of eligibility – fall through the cracks. Given the current unstable economy, more children will likely be eligible for free meals this upcoming school year and their eligibility status may fluctuate. Healthy school meals for all decreases lunch shaming and stigma in the cafeteria and allows all students access to the nutritious foods needed to help them learn.

Thank you for your time.