

Budget Request to Continue on the Path to Offer Healthy School Meals for All (HB 5014)

Chairs Frederick, McLain, and Members of the Committee,

On March 22, 2023, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which oversees school meals, announced a [game-changing proposal to reduce child hunger in schools and ensure access to school meals for all](#). Once finalized, hundreds more schools in Oregon will be eligible to serve breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students without applications through the federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

The Hunger-Free Schools provisions in the Student Success Act were designed to maximize the number of schools participating in CEP. Because this announcement was made so recently, ODE is currently analyzing both the impact of how many schools will be eligible, and how much additional funding will be required to bring Oregon into alignment with this new rule. **We join together in requesting funding in HB 5014 to ensure the Hunger-Free Schools Account is continuously sufficient to fully utilize this new option as soon as it's available so we can do right by Oregon's kids.** Sufficient funding allows all schools eligible for CEP to ensure it's financially viable, just as the Student Success Act intended.

When schools offer meals to all students at no charge through CEP, it helps ensure that all children have the nutrition they need to learn, grow and thrive. It improves educational, health, and economic outcomes for students. CEP reduces the stigma associated with school meals, advances racial equity, eliminates "school lunch debt," reduces administrative burden, and supports working parents by lowering grocery bills. CEP is a win for everyone — administrators, students, families, and school nutrition staff. Federal pandemic waivers made it possible for all schools to provide meals at no charge to all students, but that waiver 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. It did so by maximizing the number of schools participating in CEP. Prior to the SSA, only 25% of schools were able to offer breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students. With the SSA, that increased that to 55% of Oregon schools. With the new USDA proposal, **we expect hundreds more schools will become eligible for CEP.**

Funding in HB 5014 that is sufficient to maximize the impact of this rule is true to the intent of the Student Success Act, and will mean significantly more schools - and even more entire school districts - will be able to offer breakfast and lunch to all students at no charge, benefiting students, families, and schools. We urge the committee's support for this funding.

American Federation of Teachers - Oregon
American Heart Association
Children's Institute
Coalition of Oregon School Administrators
Community Action Team
East Multnomah County Schools
FoodCorps
Instacart
Mission: Readiness
Multnomah County
Northwest Regional ESD
Oregon Alliance of YMCAs
Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials
Oregon Education Association
Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network
Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Kids Read

Oregon Nurses Association
Oregon Pediatric Society
Oregon PTA
Oregon School-Based Health Alliance
Oregon School Boards Association
Oregon School Employees Association
Oregon School Nutrition Association
Our Children Oregon
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Portland Public Schools
Prevent Child Abuse Oregon
Reach Out & Read Northwest
Andy Saultz, Professor of Educational Policy
Washington County Kids

