

Submitter: Kayla Petersen  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3435  
TO: House Committee on Education  
FROM: Kayla Petersen, Beaverton School District  
SUBJECT: Yes on HB 3435

Chair Neron, Vice-Chair McIntire, Vice-Chair Dobson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kayla Petersen, I am the Wellness Coordinator at the Beaverton School District, a Registered Dietitian, and a parent of school-aged children. I am in strong support of House Bill 3435, School Meals for all, which would ensure that every Oregon kid has the food they need at school, regardless of where they live in the state or how much money their parents make.

Our district is already seeing the benefits of providing free meals to all utilizing CEP and we would love to see this become the norm throughout the state. As a parent, a school volunteer, and a district employee, I have seen firsthand the benefits of free school meals. A few of the most notable positive outcomes I have observed are:

- Exposure to new foods through entrees and salad bar offerings – especially when combined with positive peer pressure, this exposure can make students more likely to diversify their consumption. A varied diet means a wider variety of nutrients are consumed and students can better support their cognitive function, immune system, and continued growth.
- Decreased stigma around eating school meals – Especially for students who enter school only knowing ever experiencing free meals for all. Both of my students are fortunate to attend a school that has been providing free meals for the entire time they've attended – I think this helps make students less likely to associate school lunch with a certain income level and instead just makes it a simple, nutritious choice.
- Decreased parental burden – In the standard meal reimbursement system, some students who would qualify for free/reduced lunches may miss out on benefits if their parents fail to apply. With free meals for all the application process is eliminated. Not only does this increase access, it also means a decreased burden of packing lunches for parents who are already stretched thin.

We have seen a significant increase in school meal participation this year with meals being free to all students, in addition to the benefits above, this also impacts the local economy by allowing us to hire additional employees, and greater reimbursement from higher participation can help in purchasing more local foods, supporting

producers and farmers nearby our schools.

Thank you for your work to achieve School Meals for All in Oregon.