



Willamina School District

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Lynne Shore

Director of Nutrition Services

TO: House Committee on Education
FROM: Lynne Shore, Willamina School District
SUBJECT: Yes on HB 3435

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

This year, the Willamina School District has the privilege of celebrating our tenth year of providing all of our students with school meals at no charge. Willamina School District was one of the first 52 schools to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision in 2014. Now there are 188 school districts participating in the program.

Providing meals at no charge to our students has been a game changer for everyone involved in the program. Children do not have to worry about the humiliation of being “the poor kid” that gets free meals or the child that must count out quarters, dimes or pennies to eat lunch that day. When every student eats at no charge, all children are on the same level. And most importantly, all children enjoy the opportunity to receive a healthy, nutritious meal to help keep their focus in the classroom, to have less frequent office visits due to hungry tummies or behavior issues.

School meals are a smart investment in the health and future of America’s children. These meals are proven to support obesity prevention, student health and academic achievement by improving children’s diets and combating hunger. In schools that offer free meals to all students, all children are nourished for success, students face less stigma, and schools have less paperwork and administrative burden so that they can focus time and resources on preparing healthful meals that appeal to children.

Meanwhile, a 2024-2025 Trends Report by the School Nutrition Association found that school districts that must charge for meals confront a wide range of consequences: 89.3% report challenges with families in need not receiving free or reduced-price meals and 73.5% cite that students are going hungry or choosing not to eat and 96.8% of school districts face major unpaid meal debt.

When meals go unpaid for, school district nutrition programs are required to collect these funds from other sources than their non-profit school meals account. This means, in most cases, the unpaid meal debt payments are transferred from the district’s general fund account to the nutrition department leaving less money for teachers, support staff, books and other basic needs.

Seeing the effects that not providing meals at no cost to students has on students and districts alike, shouldn’t we ensure every student has access to free, nutritious school meals as part of their education?

I urge you to please support funding to help provide school meals for all students. It’s an investment in our schools, our health system and our children’s future that we just can’t put off.

I also invite you to join us at Willamina School District for lunch to see for yourself what school meals can do for students.

Sincerely,

Lynne Shore
Nutrition Services Director,
Willamina School District