

Submitter: Jordan Haas  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3435

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 3435 and the expansion of school meals at no cost in Oregon. Ensuring that every child has access to nutritious meals at school is not just a matter of fairness—it is an investment in my community's education, health, and local economy.

Studies have consistently shown that children who have access to healthy meals perform better academically, have improved concentration, and experience fewer behavioral issues. When students are well-fed, they are more engaged in the classroom, leading to better outcomes for both teachers and students. Providing school meals at no cost eliminates the stigma associated with meal programs and ensure that no child's education is impacted due to household food insecurity. Since implementing school meals at no cost districtwide in 2024, Hood River County School District has experienced an increased a 22% increase in lunch participation and an 18% increase in breakfast participation.

Beyond the classroom, universal school meals also provide a boost to our local economy. Hood River County School District prioritizes purchasing from local farmers and food producers, supporting small businesses and keeping money within our communities. Investing in universal meal programs drives demand for locally sourced food, strengthening our agricultural sector and creating jobs. In 2024 Hood River County School District spent over \$60,000 on Oregon products, much of that spent with food producers in Hood River County.

Universal school meals is a smart policy that supports education, reduces childhood hunger, and strengthens our local economy. I urge you to support this initiative and ensure that no child in our state is ever expected to learn on an empty stomach.