

Submitter: Laurie Bishop

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3435

As a Program Specialist for the Beaverton School District, I processed thousands of meal benefits applications each year, aided by two part-time employees. We spent countless hours processing both online and paper applications, sometimes needing to contact parents when application information was missing or incomplete. Our students incurred substantial meal debt, and I spent time following up with the parents of our students with the most debt. More time was spent marketing the program to encourage families to apply for benefits. In addition, I fielded many phone calls and emails from parents who had questions about the program, didn't understand why their children were being charged for meals, and more. The verification process was cumbersome and confusing for parents, resulting in hours spent communicating and tracking down correct documentation. Multiple attempts needed to be made to contact parents who did not respond to verification requests for information.

Having free meals for all has eliminated all of the above tasks, allowed our department to save money by not hiring part-time staff to process applications, and freed me up to take on a variety of different tasks within the Nutrition Services department.