

Submitter: Kristin Isenhart  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3435

My name is Kristin Isenhart, and I am currently an undergraduate 4th year student at the University of Oregon studying sociology and secondary education. For the last year and a half, I have been working for the UO Basic Needs Program on the food security team. My work has involved updating outreach materials regarding campus based and local food resources, training peers and university staff on how to support students apply for SNAP benefits, and helping students myself in that process! I have also taken many courses on food systems, and how it relates to educational settings. In one course titled "Food Landscapes", I wrote a research paper on the relationship between food waste and food insecurity at UO. It inspired me to apply for my position at Basic Needs. I have since been able to help close the gap of food insecurity and waste, by working at the ECM Student Food Pantry, and hosting events like the SNAP Fair. At our most recent SNAP Fair on February 3rd, we had 5 members of ODHS join to help provide application support and interview services to students. 166 students joined, near 45 students completed applications, and near 15 students completed interviews, leading to approvals in the program. Although the data on how many students were approved for SNAP by joining this event is kept private by ODHS, I am confident that my work in organizing this SNAP Fair connected many students to an incredible resource that closes the gap on food insecurity.

In another course I've taken, titled "Poverty in Schools" I had the opportunity to learn about the National School Lunch Program, and the adoption of Universal Free Meals. At that point, I started pursuing an undergraduate thesis on how the adoption of UFM in Oregon was relating to standardized test scores based on school districts in Lane County. Unfortunately, due to extenuating circumstances, I wasn't able to move forward with that thesis. However, it is still something I am passionate about, hence me writing this testimony. In my research for this project that I was able to complete, I quickly noticed how UFM was letting some students slip through the cracks. With this house bill, we can ensure that low-income students in districts with low poverty rates can receive equitable support that they deserve.

As a state, we have an incredible opportunity to pave the way for other states, by providing free meals to all K-12 public school students regardless of socioeconomic status. This would be an incredible accomplishment that we could be proud of. I understand that the passing of this bill has implications on where and how we source our food, and it could cost more. However, we really should prioritize the wellbeing of our public school students over economic outcomes.

Through my commitment to connecting students to food security resources at the UO

Basic Needs Program, and my interest in closing the gaps that exist with Universal Free Meals, I strongly support HB 3435.

Thank you for your time.