



February 24, 2025

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the House Committee on Education:

On behalf of Portland Public Schools, I urge you to support HB 3435, which would ensure that **every Oregon student receives healthy food at school, regardless of where they live in the state or how much money their parents make**. This critical policy will provide numerous benefits to Oregon by reducing the stigma associated with free-and-reduced school meals, boosting student learning, and supporting working families.

Thanks to the expansion of the federal Community Eligibility Provision and additional funds allocated by the state's Student Success Act, **all Portland Public Schools students have been able to enjoy breakfast and lunch at no charge for the 2024-25 school year**. All PPS students are automatically enrolled in this program, making it extremely simple for families who do not need to submit a free and reduced-price meal application. Reducing the paperwork not only eliminates barriers to school meals, it also reduces the stigma associated with free-and-reduced meals.

Access to nutritious meals is a crucial component of student success and well-being. A [growing body of research](#) demonstrates that students who participate in school breakfast programs have improved attendance, behavior, academic performance, and academic achievement as well as decreased tardiness. We have begun to see these promising benefits of free school meals within our own PPS schools.

HB 3435 will support all working families. At PPS, we have heard from many families who appreciate not having to worry about packing meals for their children and having a lower grocery store bill, at a time when food prices are high.

We thank the Legislature for passing additional funds through the Student Success Act last session to make it possible for PPS to serve school meals to all our students, free of charge. Oregon is now on the verge of another historic achievement: expanding free breakfast and lunch to **every public school student in the state**, through HB 3435. We urge your support of this critical bill.

Thank you,

Lisa Merrick
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Portland Public Schools