



Support House Bill 3435
House Committee on Education
February 24th, 2025

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

As the Strategic Initiatives Coordinator at Prevent Child Abuse Oregon (PCA Oregon), a statewide nonprofit dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect through upstream and comprehensive prevention strategies, I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 3435—School Meals for All—which would ensure every child in Oregon has the food they need at school.

Research shows economic and concrete supports—access to food, housing, child care, and economic supports—reduce child welfare system involvement¹, improve academic performance², and improve overall child and family wellbeing.

Reading and math learning outcomes in Oregon have consistently fallen below the national average for the last several years.³ Data shows that students who have access to school breakfast and lunch have improved attendance, behavior, academic performance, and academic achievement as well as decreased tardiness.⁴ Every child deserves an equal opportunity to succeed in school, yet 1 in 6 children in Oregon don't have enough food to eat.⁵ The rate is 2-3x higher for Black, Latine, and Indigenous children.⁶

Reflecting on my own personal experiences growing up in a single parent, low-income household, having access to free breakfast and lunch at school would have alleviated a significant burden on my mother who had to work multiple jobs at a time to afford our basic needs. It also would have provided my growing body with the essential nutrition and fuel I needed to stay focused on my studies throughout the day. Food is just as essential to academic success as buses and textbooks. We don't ask families to pay for these essentials, and we shouldn't for school meals either.

PCA Oregon partners with over 40 community-based organizations, state agencies, and advocacy coalitions to actualize our vision for an Oregon where all kids and families are living happy and purposeful lives with hope for the future. This vision hinges on our youngest

¹ <https://www.chapinhall.org/research/economic-and-concrete-supports-are-key-ingredients-in-programs-designed-to-prevent/>

² https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/School-Meals-are-Essential-Health-and-Learning_FNL.pdf

³ <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile?chort=1&sub=RED&sj=&sfj=NP&st=MN&year=2019R3>

⁴ https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/School-Meals-are-Essential-Health-and-Learning_FNL.pdf

⁵ <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/child/oregon>

⁶ <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/child/oregon>

Oregonians and their families having access to the economic and concrete supports required to meet their basic needs.

The most direct way to support Oregonians is to provide the resources they need and deserve, including access to healthy and nutritious food at school. Supporting HB 3435 would be an effective and efficient way to deliver resources to families struggling to make ends meet.

We are calling on our lawmakers to pass School Meals for All this legislative season so that all of our kids have the food they need to learn and grow. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to children and families in Oregon.

Sincerely,

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