



**To:** Members of the House Education Committee

**From:** Iris Maria Chávez, Oregon Coalition of Community Charter Schools

**Date:** February 24, 2025

**Re:** House Bill 3435 – School Meals for All

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Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and members of the Committee:

I write to you on behalf of the Oregon Coalition of Community Charter Schools, our state's charter support organization and are a coalition of community-based, public charter schools representing all corners of our state. We represent approximately 26,000 public school students in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade, operating in all regions of the state.

Now more than ever, we have seen how Oregon families and students have varying needs and wants when it comes to their education. Our schools, as public charter schools, have been developed to meet these varying needs and our educational models are founded on the principle of meeting our students where they are.

As hubs of the communities in which we operate we recognize that students come to our schools with needs beyond their educational ones needing to be met. When possible, our public charter schools provide healthy school meals to our students. We all know that hungry students have difficulty learning and with positive classroom behaviors. Providing the opportunity for more schools to reach more students with the School Meals for All program is critical to helping Oregon reach our educational goals.

However, too many of our public charter school students are in buildings that are ill suited for providing educational services and of subpar safety and quality, which prohibits their ability to offer school meals programs at all. The implementation grants offered by HB 3435 are critical for increasing participation in our School Meals programs. Without adequate facilities for preparing, storing, and serving school meals we will continue to see students struggle to have healthy meal options that keep them learning and engaged in the classroom. The legislature has the opportunity this year to make significant gains in school meals access for students, we hope you'll support this bill and ensure full funding of the implementation grants.

Sincerely,

Iris Maria Chávez

Oregon Coalition of Community Charter Schools (ORC3S)