



Multnomah Education Service District

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TO: House Committee on Education

FROM: Multnomah Education Service District, Reynolds School District, David Douglas School District, Parkrose School District

SUBJECT: Yes on HB 3435

DATE: February 24, 2025

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

On behalf of Multnomah Education Service District and east county school districts, we are in strong support of House Bill 3435, School Meals for All. Many of the districts in our service area are currently able to provide free meals to all students. We know how critical this support is for our students' ability to learn, and we believe all districts across the state should be able to do the same. No student should face barriers to learning due to their access to food, and yet they currently do.

At our districts, we see firsthand how offering free meals to all students removes barriers, improves concentration, and supports overall well-being. Through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), we can ensure that all students have access to nutritious meals at no cost, eliminating stigma and reducing food insecurity. When students have reliable access to meals, they can stay engaged in the classroom and focus on their education.

While we all support the intent to ensure all students have access to free and nutritious meals, we also recognize that these are real costs borne and request the fiscal analysis to ensure that school districts are funded to meet this critical need to provide universal meals. Therefore, we strongly support current service level funding for our existing School Meals Initiative within the Student Success Act (\$124 million for the 2025-27 biennium). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Pooja Bhatt,

Interim Government Relations, MESD