



Representative Hoa Nguyen  
Oregon House District 48

HB 3435 - SCHOOL MEALS FOR ALL

**2/24 House Committee on Education**

Thank you, Chair, vice chair and members of the committee. I am State Representative Hoa Nguyen, for House District 48, which includes outer Southeast Portland and North Clackamas County.

I serve as an educator in Oregon. I want to express my strong support for House Bill 3435, which would ensure that all school meals in our state are provided at no cost to every student.

Every child deserves access to nutritious food, and ensuring that all school meals are free is a critical step in addressing food insecurity among our students. In my classroom, I have seen firsthand how hunger detracts from learning. When students are well-nourished, they are better able to concentrate, engage, and absorb the material we teach. By guaranteeing access to healthy meals, we are not just feeding our children—we are investing in their academic success and overall well-being.

Research consistently demonstrates that students who receive balanced meals perform better academically and experience fewer behavioral issues. A universal free meal program eliminates the stigma associated with free and reduced-price meal programs, fostering an inclusive environment where every student can thrive. When students are not preoccupied with hunger, they can participate more fully in class, contributing to a more positive and productive learning environment.

From an educator's perspective, the administrative challenges of tracking eligibility for meal programs often divert time and energy away from the core mission of teaching. Universal free meals simplify this process, allowing schools to redirect valuable resources and focus on what truly matters—providing a high-quality education. This efficiency not only benefits students but also reduces stress and paperwork for school staff, creating a more supportive educational environment.

Nutrition plays a vital role in a child's physical and cognitive development. With a universal meal program, schools can offer meals that meet or exceed federal nutrition standards, setting students up for a lifetime of healthy choices. By investing in our students' health today, we are potentially saving on future healthcare costs and ensuring that our youth are well-equipped to lead productive, healthy lives.

In Oregon, ensuring that every student has access to nutritious meals regardless of their household income is a matter of equity and social justice. Our commitment to universal free meals reflects our values as a community that cares for every child. It is our responsibility to remove barriers to success and create an environment where every student has the resources to reach their full potential.

For these reasons, I urge you to support House Bill 3435. This legislation is not just about food—it's about the future of our children and the strength of our community. By ensuring that every student in Oregon has access to healthy, nutritious meals, we are laying the foundation for improved academic performance, enhanced health outcomes, and a more equitable society.

Thank you for your time and consideration.