

TO: House Committee on Education

FROM: *Auveen Shafaei/Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon*

SUBJECT: Yes on HB 3435

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

My name is Auveen Shafaei, Youth Advisory Leader at Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon. House Bill 3435, School Meals for all, would ensure that every Oregon kid has the food they need at school, regardless of where they live in the state or how much money their parents make.

At my high school, we don't provide school meals for all. It feels terrible knowing some of my classmates don't have the food they need to focus and learn. Food insecurity is a huge problem in our state. As a student, I know first-hand how important food is to academic success. No one can learn on an empty stomach - it's difficult to focus when your stomach is growling and all you can think about is when you're going to eat your next meal. If I skip breakfast one day, all I'm waiting for at school is lunch and it makes it difficult to focus on my class work and listen to my teachers.

My school has a large wealth disparity, so while we don't qualify for universal school meals, there are many students who are left behind. How are kids supposed to learn when they're hungry? How are kids supposed to pay attention when all they're thinking about is where their next meal is coming from? It's not only about feeding students, but growing a more equitable system.

In closing, we need to pass School Meals for All. Kids can't learn when they're hungry or worried about where their next meal will come from. Therefore, I urge the committee to pass HB 3435.