

Submitter: Brian Berry

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

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Though the importance of good nutrition has been discussed along with Early Intervention services, it seems that the starting point has to be every infant and child has the right to good nutrition. In my 38 years in the field of education in small rural communities, it has become obvious that proper nutrition in childcare settings is crucial for the healthy development of young children. It not only supports their physical growth but also enhances cognitive development, emotional well-being, and positive long-term health outcomes.

In the small community of Yoncalla, adequate nutrition has been fundamental for the physical growth and development of children in our highly successful preschool. During these early years, children experience rapid growth, and their nutritional needs are higher compared to their body size. Nutrient-rich foods provide the essential vitamins and minerals necessary for bone development, muscle growth, and overall physical health. Imagine the amount of money that would be saved if children received these types of nutrient-rich foods. This would be an absolute game changer in decreasing health issues and driving improvements in the educational system in Oregon through improved cognitive development.

In small rural communities, we look for long term benefits that are sustainable in anything we do. Establishing healthy eating habits early in life has these types of long-term and sustainable benefits. Children who learn to enjoy a variety of nutritious foods are more likely to continue these habits into adulthood. This can reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. In the long term, this saves taxpayer's money. Moreover, early exposure to healthy foods can shape children's food preferences and encourage an appreciation for nutritious eating. This creates an environment where healthy eating is the norm and breaks the cycle of unhealthy eating.

To be sure, the benefits of childcare nutrition are widespread and multifaceted. Proper nutrition supports physical growth, cognitive development, emotional well-being, and long-term health. By prioritizing nutritious meals and snacks, childcare providers can make a significant positive impact on the lives of young children, setting them on a path to a healthy successful future and a better Oregon.

Respectfully,  
Brian Berry, Superintendent  
Yoncalla School District