

Submitter:

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On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB1581

As a high school teacher, I see many growing students benefitting from free school meals. However, when not all students have access to free meals and only low income students do, it creates a stigma and shame around using that benefit. Even in affluent areas, and perhaps even more so (I teach in the West Linn-Wilsonville School District), students stand out when they use their free or reduced lunch benefit. Most students' greatest desire is to fit in with their friends, even if that means skipping meals. Some of my low income students are brave and go around asking their friends for all their fruit cups they didn't eat in order to make their lunch a little larger. Many other students don't want to stand out, and hang out at lunchtime with their friends and don't eat the school meals they could be accessing. When ALL students have open access to free school meals, the students who really need them can access that benefit without shame and stigma. Hungry students who forgot their lunch bag or whose parents are too ill or flustered that week to think about lunches can also access nutrition when they need it. I strongly support the free school meals for all bill SB1581.