

SUBJECT: In Support for Senate Bill 1581: School Meals for All.

TO: President Frederick, Vice President Weber, and members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Alma, and I live in Washington County. I am here today to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1581: School Meals for All.

Food is not a privilege; it is a right. No student should have to worry about whether they will have something to eat while trying to learn, grow, and build their future. No student should ever have to feel ashamed for needing food. And no child should have to go to bed hungry or wonder whether they will eat the next day.

Senate Bill 1581 ensures that all students have access to breakfast and lunch at school at no cost. It also supports options such as breakfast in the classroom, helping students who struggle to arrive early, or who do not have access to school transportation. This does not only nourish bodies, but it also supports learning. When students have access to nutritious food: their academic performance improves, school attendance increases, disciplinary issues decrease, and most importantly, they feel cared for and valued.

Food is a universal necessity; everyone should have access to it, regardless of income, which too often represents a significant barrier for students to exercise that right in schools. Speaking about this issue is personal to me. During a period of my life as a student, the only complete meal I had each day was the one I received at school because my family did not have sufficient resources. Many nights, my dinner consisted only of instant soup, lacking the nutritional value a child needs. I remember how difficult it was to concentrate, to feel energized, or simply not feel hungry during the school day.

That is why I feel strongly about this bill. I know there are still many students living in this same reality. Although many years have passed, many families continue to face economic hardships, and their children depend on school meals to meet their basic needs. We also know that many families do not apply for free meals out of fear of sharing personal information or concern about stigma, especially in communities that today face discrimination, uncertainty, and social pressure. This legislation helps eliminate that fear and shame.

I respectfully ask you to vote yes on SB 1581, so that the State of Oregon can become the 10th state to adopt what other states have already done, guaranteeing free breakfast and lunch to all students — ensuring that hunger is not a barrier to learning, that dignity is a priority, and that every student has a real opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for reading my testimony and for your commitment to our students.

Respectfully,

ALMA

Resident of Washington County