

Providence Health & Services
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February 6, 2015

The Honorable Margaret Doherty
Chair, House Committee on Education
State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: House Bill 2545, Free lunch for vulnerable children

Dear Representative Doherty and members of the committee:

Providence Health & Services continues a vibrant, nearly 160 year, history of caring for individuals within our ministries in addition to seeking out those in the most need. Today, with the support of our frontline caregivers and a diverse group of community partners, Providence's commitment to serving our communities is stronger than ever.

Daily we are faced with the reality that Oregon is one of the nation's most food-insecure states. Our children are at high risk for developmental problems, frequent illness and nutritional inadequacies. Providence respectfully requests that the committee support HB 2545 as a means of reducing the barriers that low-income children face at school due to lack of adequate nutrition.

Providence is committed to fighting hunger in new and innovative ways. Providence Medical Group clinics are identifying food-insecure families during medical visits and connecting them to food assistance, through programs like "Screen and Intervene." At Providence Milwaukie Hospital we're co-locating a teaching kitchen to help educate local families about cooking healthy and a "food prescription" program that provides the nutritious food they need to make changes. Additionally, we are supporting programs like The Canby Center's Backpack Buddies that provides nutritious snacks and meals for children over the weekend.

One of the evolving partnerships we're most proud of is our work with Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon. Our shared goal is to supply breakfast, after-school snacks and summer food programs for hungry children across Oregon. Raising money, building coalitions and mobilizing champions across the state is a huge part of this work – but sound public policy changes will ensure we can beat childhood hunger in Oregon.

Providence believes in 'Creating healthier communities, together' - we hope you'll join us in support of HB 2545. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment; we look forward to participating in any further discussions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pam Mariea-Nason".

Pam Mariea-Nason, RN, MBA
Executive, Community Health Division
Providence Health & Services - Oregon