



Partners for a  
Hunger-Free Oregon

*Ending hunger before it begins.*

To: House Committee on Education  
From: Matt Newell-Ching, Public Affairs Director  
Subject: Statement of support for HB 2652  
Date: February 12, 2017

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When Oregon's students eat nutritious meals at school, kids succeed and communities thrive.

All kids deserve a healthy start in life. When a student eats breakfast at school, she is more likely to achieve in the classroom and graduate high school. Yet one in four kids in Oregon lives in a household that experiences hunger or is at risk of hunger.

Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon supports HB 2652. This bill would help more high-poverty schools serve breakfast and lunch to all students at no charge by participating in the Community Eligibility Program (CEP). It would do this by starting a state fund to help cover the portion of the cost of operating CEP that is not reimbursed by the federal government.

### **How does the Community Eligibility Program (CEP) work, and how would HB 2652 help it work even better?**

CEP is a federal program that allows high-poverty schools to serve meals to all students at no charge. A school is eligible for CEP based on the percentage of students at that school identified as participating in a program like SNAP, or who are homeless, migrant, or in foster care. Schools with 40% or higher Identified Student Percentage (ISP) are eligible to participate in CEP. This helps students succeed in the classroom, creates a healthy school environment, reduces stigma, and reduces paperwork for schools.

For schools with an ISP that is 62.5% or higher, the federal government reimburses 100% of school meals. But for several hundred relatively high-poverty schools in Oregon, USDA will cover most – but not all – of the costs of meals. From 40% to 62.5% ISP, USDA reimburses schools on a sliding scale. HB 2652 would allow the state to make up the difference between what USDA reimburses for school meals and what a school has to pay.

### **What are the benefits of CEP?**

- **Increased school meal participation.** Participating Oregon schools reach over 70% of their kids with school meals, as compared to non-participating schools at

40%. Students who eat school meals are more likely to improve behavior, do well in school, and graduate high school.

- **Reduced stigma** for kids, because everyone can participate.
- **Shortened cafeteria lines** so kids have more time to eat.
- **Reduced paperwork** and administrative burdens on schools.
- **No more "benefit cliff"** for families just above income eligibility for free meals.
- **No more need for principals and teachers to collect debts** for school meals from parents.
- **Improved financial viability for school meal programs** because schools are operating at a higher economy of scale. In fact, some schools that benefit from state funds in first year of participation may not need it in their second year.

### **Why don't some schools that are eligible for CEP participate, and how would HB 2652 help?**

Cost is a major factor in a school's choice of whether to participate in CEP. The "break-even" point for schools is 62.5% ISP. In 2015-2016, 476 schools were eligible for CEP, and 340 participated. Of schools with 60% or higher ISP, almost all - 94% - participated in CEP. Of the 136 schools that didn't participate, 93% were between 40%-60% ISP.

HB 2652 is aimed at helping schools that want to participate, but can't because of the extra cost to schools to eligible schools with lower ISPs. HB 2652 would help schools make up that cost.

Thank you to the members of the committee for consideration of this bill to help more students in Oregon succeed.