



To: Joint Committee on Student Success
From: Matt Newell-Ching, Public Affairs Director
Subject: Statement of Support for the Student Success Act (HB 2019), including Universal Access to School Meals and Breakfast after the Bell
Date: April 11, 2019

"Research and experience show us that school meals boost student achievement, attendance, graduation, and earnings later in life."

-Joint Committee on Student Success,
Students Ready and Able to Learn Workgroup



What do conditions for student success look like? Smaller class sizes. More instructional time. Stronger mental health support. Smart investments in early learning. Career-technical training.

And kids who are well-nourished and ready to learn.

Yet one in three kids who live in a food insecure household in Oregon don't qualify for free school meals. On top of that, most students arrive at school after breakfast has been served.

To address this, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon strongly supports the Student Success Act (HB 2019). We are thrilled that the proposed framework includes the intent to create Universal Access to School Meals as a Statewide Initiative with the intent to refine this proposal. An investment in school meals is consistent with a wide body of research showing the connection between school meals and student success. Specifically, here are our recommendations improve access to school meals:

- **Universal Access to School Meals:** Make schools hunger-free by filling federal funding gaps so 761 schools in Oregon (62% of students) with the highest need can offer meals to all kids at no charge (Universal School Meals). For the remaining 484 schools (38% of students), Oregon would provide targeted support to students so eligibility for school meals is consistent with children's health insurance.
- **Breakfast After the Bell:** Ensure students have access to breakfast at school. Removes a scheduling barrier for students at schools with the highest rates of poverty by ensuring that breakfast is available after the bell. Schools have the flexibility to use the model that makes sense in each setting.



More specifically, we would like to submit for the record the nature of our amendment request for the Statewide Initiative relating to school meals (Page 36, line 26 of the -6 amdt.). This recommendation was developed in consultation with parents, community members, and a broad range of education stakeholders to design a policy that's great for kids, creates a healthy school environment, and maximizes federal resources.

Universal Access to School Meals

The following is based on an amendment request to HB 2760, which was passed out of the House Education Committee on a bipartisan basis on April 8 with the intent to amend in JCSS.

- **Community Eligibility:** Provides state funding to maximize the number of schools that can serve meals to all kids at no charge and without applications through the federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), and leverage the maximum amount of federal funding in so doing.
 - Preliminary estimates indicate that 761 schools with the highest need would be able to serve meals to all kids at no charge (currently 335 schools).
 - The fund would fill the gap between federal funding for CEP and the equivalent of full reimbursement per meal.
 - For example, in a district that creates a CEP group that would receive federal funding for 70% of full meal reimbursement, the state fund would reimburse a district for costs up to the remaining 30% of the full reimbursement.
 - Schools eligible for the fund include both currently-participating and new CEP schools.
- **Family Eligibility:** Targeted assistance for students at Non-CEP schools to align eligibility for free meals to eligibility with children's health insurance.
 - At schools not eligible to participate in CEP (estimated at 484 schools), uses state funding to increase income eligibility for students so it is consistent with eligibility for children's health insurance (300% Federal Poverty Level (FPL)).
 - Currently students in Oregon are eligible for meals at no charge up to 185% FPL, but one in three kids experiencing food insecurity lives in a household above this line. Preliminary estimates are that more than 48,000 students in Oregon would benefit.
 - Conducts a feasibility study to determine if Oregon can start a categorical eligibility program to directly certify students for meals at no charge who are currently enrolled in state Children's Health Insurance - similarly to current Direct Certification with SNAP and other programs.
- Effective school year 2020-2021.



Breakfast After the Bell

The following is based on an amendment request to HB 2765, which was passed out of the House Education Committee on a bipartisan basis on April 8 with the intent to amend in JCSS.

- Removes barriers to accessing school breakfast relating to scheduling for students at schools with high rates of poverty .
- Requires schools with 70% or higher Free/Reduced eligible students to offer breakfast after the opening bell.
 - Gives schools flexibility to define which service location/model is best for each school (cafeteria, grab and go, classroom, second chance, and models approved by ODE).
 - Schools can apply for a waiver if there's already 70% of kids eligible for F/R meals participating in breakfast relative to lunch participation.
- Starts a fund to for small equipment purchases necessary for implementation.
- Effective School Year 2020-2021.

Along with other investments in the Student Success Act, these policies will:

- **Increase future potential.** Ensuring kids get healthy food is a critical step on the path out of poverty. This is good for Oregon. When you have stronger, smarter, healthier kids, you have a stronger, smarter, healthier, more economically competitive state.
- **Create Conditions for Student Success.** Students who eat breakfast at school have better attendance, show improvements in test scores, graduate at higher rates, and earn more as adults. This is good for kids. When children consistently get the food they need, they learn more.
- **Reduce stigma.** Universal meals level the playing field for all students. Kids at community eligibility schools will no longer feel singled out for eating a school meal. Students no longer have to choose between hanging out with friends before class or getting their much-needed meal. It's just classmates breaking bread together.
- **Meet the needs of kids and working parents.** In listening circles with parents and students, the idea of universal meals emerged as a key issue. Universal meals take some of the burden off of busy parents and families and can ease the stress of the morning routine of buses, transport, and work schedules.
- **Address the "Benefit Cliff."** Due to the high cost of housing, 37% of kids in Oregon who experience food insecurity are in households that earn too much to qualify for meals at no charge.