

April 30, 2019

Senate HealthCare Committee  
900 Court St NE, Salem OR 97301

Dear Senate Health Committee,

Plant-based diets are wonderful. However, HB3342 is unnecessary legislation.

Individual preferences are already accounted for in hospital and long-term care settings across Oregon. In most hospitals, they use a 'room service' style in which patients can pick and choose from the menu. Staff such as Registered Dietitian Nutritionists can help patients make selections that align with their philosophical and medical nutrition therapy needs.

In long term care settings, nutrition assessments are completed as part of the admittance process and includes noting dietary preferences/avoidances, allergies and medical nutrition therapy considerations.

In my 17 years working in hospital, long term care and geriatric primary care settings, I have learned that flexibility is the best policy when it comes to nourishing frail, vulnerable people. While we may discuss diets in 'black and white' terms, in practice people tend to eat in the 'gray.' For example, I have lost count of how many people tell me they avoid pork – and without batting an eye – say 'Yes' they do eat bacon.

In hospital and long-term care settings, every patient/resident has a Diet Order/Prescription on file. If this order is written as "Plant-Based/Vegan" and the patient decides they'd like some scrambled eggs, milk-based yogurt, or honey for tea, they are likely to be told it is not consistent with their diet order and politely told 'No.'

On the other hand, if their diet order is written as "General diet," they are free to pick and choose a plant-based/vegan diet, or include animal products at their discretion and without well-intentioned interference.

I have learned that when people are in the hospital, or in a long-term care setting, they generally don't feel well and want comforting, familiar foods. While they may have a close encounter with their mortality that later inspires them to invest more in their health by eating more plants and less animal products and other lifestyle changes, it can take weeks or months or longer for folks to be in a medically and emotionally stable position to make those investments.

HB3342 will not convert more people to a plant-based diet, and the accommodations to eat a plant-based pattern already exist in hospital and long-term care settings. Please oppose HB3342.

Sincerely,

Meredith Kleinhenz, RDN, CSG, LD

Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, Certified Specialist in Gerontological Nutrition  
Portland, Oregon

Constituent of Lew Frederick and Tawna Sanchez