

Good afternoon,

This letter is in general support of **HB 3342-A**. There is pretty strong global research that the typical American diet full of highly processed foods (refined grains, sugar) and meats, and low in whole plant foods like fruit, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds has been contributing to multiple chronic diseases that are killing us – physically, mentally and economically.

Increasing the intake of healthy plant foods can help reverse/manage many of these diseases, reduce the need for certain costly medications, and take up a smaller carbon footprint. Helping ensure that the healthy plant-based meal options are available in hospitals, long-term care facilities, and prisons seems like the only responsible public health approach. The challenge is to do it right (tasty, balanced meals addressing nutrient and calorie needs). At the hospital where I work, we have always offered an exclusively vegetarian cafeteria menu for staff and visitors, and offer both meat and vegetarian options for patients. This should be very doable in other areas in Oregon as well to meet the health needs, and preferences of patients, prisoners, etc.

It also makes sense to help ensure that we respect the needs of patients who have religious, ethical and cultural beliefs that require plant-based foods. For some patients/prisoners, not offering a varied plant-based menu options, could lead to malnourishment. An example would be a patient being given meat that they refuse, and thus have inadequate protein intake when offering an appealing and inexpensive bean/legume dish could fit the bill. I would hope that care providers would do this because it is the right thing to do, but they might not care enough, or have the knowledge of how to do so. Sensible legislation can help nudge positive change.

I support the intent/vision, but also acknowledge that the bill as written, may not be as clear as it could be. I have an idea what “healthy, plant-based meals” look like for most individuals, but we are all unique, and the proposed law may not be clear enough for some to apply intelligently. This could be a concern. Unfortunately, many doctors are even unclear about what such a diet means, or understand it’s amazing benefits. These are concerns that could hopefully be addressed later.

While I do not know enough about the legislative process, I believe this bill can help get us moving in a direction of better health and nutrition, as well as respectfully responding to the needs/values of patients/prisoners. Thank-you for your consideration.

To health & hope!

Ed Hoover, M.A.

Manager, LivingWell/Community Wellness

Gresham, OR

