

March 15, 2021

House Committee on Human Services  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Williams, Vice-Chair Leif, Vice-Chair Ruiz, and Members of the Committee:

As a registered dietitian and a certified diabetes educator from your neighboring state of California, I want to urge **my strong support of Oregon House Bill 2348**. And, I want to offer my assistance in the form of a case study and technical assistance should this measure pass.

I work at Adventist Health Howard Memorial Hospital, which is a 25-bed critical access hospital in Willits, CA, about 3 hours north of San Francisco in Mendocino county. We serve a wide variety of patients from orthopedics to GI cases and have had significant growth over the past 5-10 years. We also have multiple outpatient programs including nutrition and diabetes education.

In an effort to continually provide patient-centered care, we've been working on improving our food choices to suit a variety of needs. Most recently we've made the change to follow the 2017 AMA guidelines for hospital food and offer healthful, plant-based meals to patients, staff and community members. And, in California, a plant-based measure similar to this one was passed in 2018, and though we already had plant-based and vegetarian items, we made changes to highlight and promote these meals.

Some of the plant-based favorites on our menu right now are:

#### Breakfast

- Whole grain oatmeal pancakes
- Granola
- Power Porridge (whole grain hot cereal)

#### Lunch/Dinner

- Daily Soup Special (bean and veggie, butternut squash, etc.)
- Salads with organic garden veggies
- Quinoa and Black Bean Burger
- Tofu stir fry with brown rice
- Tacos/Burritos with beans and veggies

#### Dessert

- Vegan carrot cake and chocolate cake
- Fresh fruit

At our hospital, we are fortunate to have everything house-made and as fresh as possible. Our inpatient dietitians go through the menu with patients during their time at the hospital and review why these options can help their specific conditions.

A big concern in hospitals and food service operations is the budget. We've found that offering plant-based foods is very economical if the focus is on basic, whole foods. Using meat replacements is a great way to gain acceptance for those who are hesitant about plant-based foods, but the cost can add up for a small facility. Bigger facilities can place larger orders which reduces the overall cost, and more plant-based products are becoming available from major food suppliers, driving the cost down as demand is increasing. But what's worked for us is focusing on whole foods like our homemade bean burger, tofu, brown rice, vegetables, etc., and it's quite affordable. Here's an example of our cost comparison that shows how effective this can be for the bottom line:

2 egg omelet with cheese: \$1.26  
**Oatmeal with dates and nuts: \$0.30**

Beef burger patties: \$1.13 per patty  
**Beyond Burger: \$1.94 per patty**  
**Bean and quinoa patties: \$0.33 per patty**

Chicken stir fry: \$2.36  
**Tofu stir fry: \$1.72**

Making changes to menus isn't always easy, it's a team approach, but our food is quite well-received. When we were open to the community, pre-pandemic, we were known as the best restaurant in town. Especially for some of the low-income community members it's invaluable that we're able to offer healthy meals at an affordable price.

We have a great inpatient RD team who work hard at educating patients on a healthy diet while they're in the hospital. This education makes more of an impact when we have healthy foods to offer patients right there in front of them. It also makes a difference in our outpatient programs when the food we recommend is in line with the food we serve in our restaurant. When we can make a difference in the food choices of our patients, and especially get them into one of our outpatient programs, it goes a long way towards decreasing our readmission rates and keeping our community out of the hospital.

Just like patients, our staff need a little push in the right direction sometimes as well. Over the years and months that we've been offering plant-based options, staff members have begun to ask questions and change their habits.

There's definitely some learning and changing that can be hard at times, but we've always been able to reach out for support from organizations like physicians committee for responsible medicine and the Humane Society of the United states which have both helped us with recipes, menu planning, training staff, and navigate setbacks. In your materials you can see that the Coalition for Plant-based Food in Hospitals also

offers technical assistance. Here at Howard Memorial we've also been able to offer advice to other facilities and nursing homes looking to make similar changes, we'd be pleased to do the same for Oregon facilities.

Our facility and team stand by to support Oregonians with this important step forward. Thank you for your consideration, I strongly urge your support of HB 2348.

Sincerely,

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