

Submitter: Courtney Wright

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3435

I'm writing as a parent at Alameda Elementary, president of the Alameda PTA and an employee of Oregon Food Bank.

This fall, families across Portland were thrilled to learn that all Portland Public Schools were going to receive universal school meals for the 24/25 school year. While the rate of food insecurity may be lower at our school, we know that there are many in the broader PPS community that have greatly benefitted from this program. What a relief it must be for parents and caregivers to know that breakfast and lunch is provided for their children at no cost. Those extra dollars can now go toward the cost of housing, other groceries, healthcare and more.

In my role at Oregon Food Bank, I have the privilege of working with the community partners who run pantries, meal services and other food access programs. Since SNAP benefits were cut in spring 2023, the number of client visits have reached an all-time high, with 30% more folks accessing food in the last year than during peak pandemic operations. Read that again - there was a 30% increase in visits to food assistance sites following SNAP cuts. School Meals for All is a vital part of the network of programs needed to end hunger in Oregon.

Students can't learn when they're hungry, or when they're worried about their next meal. Teachers can't teach if they are managing hungry kids. Families shouldn't have to worry about school meals when they have other needs to manage. I urge Oregon lawmakers to pass School Meals for All so that no student in Oregon goes hungry, no matter where they live or how much money their family earns.

Thank you for your consideration,
Courtney Wright