

Submitter: Laura Gonzalez
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3201

Dear Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chair Scharf, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Laura Gonzalez, and I am a Graduate Intern with Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon (PHFO). Today, I'm writing not just as an advocate, but as someone who deeply cares about the well-being of children in our state.

HB 3201 is an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of young children by increasing access to healthy, culturally relevant food through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Right now, one in six children in Oregon experiences food insecurity. And that rate is 2-3 times higher for Black and Indigenous Oregonians. That means hundreds of kids are going without the nutrition they need to grow, learn, and thrive. We have a responsibility to do better.

Through my work as a Graduate Intern at PHFO, I've started to gather stories and data on the challenges and barriers to CACFP. Time and time again, child care providers express that access to culturally specific foods is a real struggle. The federal framework that supports the CACFP program, including USDA resources for implementing these programs, were not designed for ease of use, and especially not ease of use by Oregon's immigrant and multicultural communities. The meals served should reflect and respect the diverse backgrounds of the children receiving them because in addition to nutrition, food is also about identity and belonging. With support for culturally specific meal planning, home based childcare providers can take advantage of this federally supported program while serving nutritionally dense food that reflects what kids eat at home, something we all deserve.

Supporting HB 3201 is about improving nutrition and ensuring that every child has the same opportunity to receive meals that are culturally relevant. It's about strengthening our child care providers and making sure they have the resources to provide high-quality care. When we invest in children, we invest in the future of our communities.

I urge you to stand up for Oregon's kids and vote yes on HB 3201. Let's put children first.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Laura Gonzalez
Graduate Intern, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon