

## **Testimony in Support of SB 1581**

Submitted by the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA)

Senate Committee on Education

February 3, 2026

**Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee,**

For the record, my name is Cassidy Kotter, and I am a Government Relations Specialist for the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA). On behalf of the more than 25,000 classified educators that we represent, working in nearly every level of public education across all 36 Oregon counties, including the nutrition services staff who prepare and serve meals to students every day, we strongly urge your support for **Senate Bill (SB) 1581**.

SB 1581 would ensure that every Oregon student has access to breakfast and lunch at no cost, regardless of household income. OSEA members see the impact of food insecurity every day. Our school nutrition professionals witness firsthand how access to consistent, nutritious meals improves student focus, behavior, attendance, and overall well-being. Universal access removes stigma, eliminates lunch debt, and guarantees that no child has to worry about where their next meal will come from while at school.

Too many working families fall just above the eligibility threshold for free and reduced-price meals, yet still struggle to keep up with rising food and living costs. SB 1581 closes this gap by creating a fair, inclusive system that ensures all students are supported, no matter their family's financial situation.

This policy also strengthens school meal programs and supports the classified employees who make them possible. When meals are universally available, staff spend less time on paperwork, payment tracking, and debt collection and more time doing what they do best: preparing healthy meals and creating welcoming cafeteria environments for students. It improves efficiency, reduces administrative strain, and creates a more sustainable model for school nutrition operations.

OSEA believes SB 1581 is an investment in student success, educational equity, and the school workforce. We urge you to move this bill forward and help build a stronger, healthier future for Oregon's students and school communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Sincerely,**

Cassidy Kotter

Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA), Government Relations Specialist

