



Representative Lamar Wise
Oregon House District 48

SB 1581- School Meals for All

Senate Education Committee | February 3rd 2026

Chair and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Representative Lamar Wise, and I'm proud to speak in strong support of Senate Bill 1581.

Food is not a luxury in our schools. It is as essential to student success as transportation, textbooks, and qualified educators. We do not ask families to pay out of pocket for those necessities, and we should not be asking them to do so for school meals either.

We know the reality facing families across Oregon. One in six children lives in a household experiencing food insecurity, and many more face hunger at different points throughout the school year. At the same time, families are navigating an affordability crisis that is stretching household budgets to the breaking point. SB 1581 responds directly to that reality.

This bill ensures that every student in Oregon has access to breakfast and lunch at no cost, regardless of income. It removes stigma, eliminates unpaid meal debt, and reduces administrative burdens on schools, allowing educators and staff to focus on teaching and supporting students, not policing lunch lines.

The research is clear. Universal free meal programs improve student nutrition, well-being, and cognitive function. They are also associated with reduced absenteeism and fewer disciplinary incidents, at rates comparable to restorative justice programs. When students are nourished, they are more focused, more engaged, and better able to learn.

SB 1581 is also a meaningful investment in Oregon families. School Meals for All saves families an estimated \$1,441 per child each year. At a time when federal SNAP rollbacks are increasing food insecurity, providing meals at school is one of the most direct and reliable ways we can support children and stabilize households.

Finally, this bill reflects our values. It promotes dignity, belonging, and equity. No child should feel singled out or excluded because of their family's income. SB 1581 helps ensure that every student can walk into their school knowing their basic needs will be met.

I urge your support for SB 1581 and for Oregon's commitment to becoming a hunger-free schools state.

Thank you.