



Oregon School Psychologists Association

February 3, 2026

Chair Fredrick, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon School Psychologists Association (OSPA), I am writing to express our strong support for **HB 1581**, which would make **School Meals for All** a permanent policy in Oregon. As school psychologists, we work daily at the intersection of education, mental health, and equity, and we see firsthand how access to basic needs, especially nutritious meals directly affects student well-being and learning.

The benefits of universal school meals extend far beyond academics. Research consistently shows that providing meals at no cost significantly reduces absenteeism and chronic absenteeism, ensuring more students are present, regulated, and ready to engage in learning. Hunger can contribute to attention and behavioral challenges as well as emotional dysregulation, which are critical to student success, social wellbeing, and mental health.

Equally important, universal school meals remove the stigma and financial barriers often associated with traditional school meal programs. When meals are available to all students, regardless of income, schools foster a more inclusive and supportive environment where every child feels valued, supported, safe, and cared for. This sense of belonging is foundational to positive mental health and school connectedness, which are key protective factors for children and adolescents.

Oregon has long been a national leader in advancing policies that support children and families. By passing HB 1581, Oregon has the opportunity to once again lead by making School Meals for All a permanent reality. This legislation represents a critical investment in health equity, educational access, and the long-term success of Oregon's students.

On behalf of OSPA and the school psychologists serving students across our state, we urge you to support HB 1581 and ensure that every child in Oregon has reliable access to the nutrition they need to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Farnosh Ghasemi, Oregon School Psychologists Association - President