

Submitter: Carolyn Stein
On Behalf Of: Food for Lane County
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1581

Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Education Committee

My name is Carolyn Stein, and I am the Executive Director of Food for Lane County, the regional food bank serving Lane County, Oregon. Today, I am submitting testimony in strong support of SB 1581: School Meals for All.

SB 1581 ensures that every student can access breakfast and lunch at school at no cost, regardless of income. This is a critical step to addressing hunger during an affordability crisis and ensuring that students can focus on learning rather than worrying about food.

I am especially encouraged that SB 1581 makes breakfast accessible after the start of the school day, recognizing that many students arrive late due to transportation barriers or family work schedules. Allowing breakfast to be served in the classroom and counted as instructional time ensures students are nourished without losing valuable learning time.

The bill also reduces administrative burdens for schools by eliminating meal applications, income verification, and unpaid meal debt collection.

Over the past two years, Food for Lane County has seen a 100% increase in visits to pantries. This coupled with USDA cuts to food supply and federal funding means less food is available to children and families through the emergency food system. School Meals for all will provide needed support to children and reduce the burden on parents that are struggling to put food on the table at home.

Research and lived experience consistently show that when students have reliable access to nutritious food, schools see improved attendance, fewer disciplinary incidents, and stronger academic outcomes. SB 1581 is a smart investment in Oregon's students and our future.

With only a small number of schools remaining before Oregon becomes a Hunger-Free Schools state, I urge you to vote YES on SB 1581 and ensure that no child in Oregon goes hungry at school.

Thank you for your time and leadership.

Carolyn Stein
Executive Director

Food for Lane County