

Submitter:

Julia Wentzel

On Behalf Of:

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 Julia Wentzel, and I live in Tillamook, Oregon. 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. Just as importantly, it protects students from stigma and meal shaming, helping create school environments rooted in dignity, equity, and inclusion.

More than half of the students living in Tillamook County qualify for free or reduced meals, but we know that not all of them are accessing the food they need. We also know that 25% of families in Tillamook County are experiencing food insecurity despite not qualifying for federal assistance. Reducing stigma and increasing access to healthy food for growing kids would have a tremendous impact on our county's youth.

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.

Respectfully,

Julia Wentzel

Tillamook, Oregon

Oregon Food Bank - Tillamook County Services