

Submitter: Amber Roth

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1581

My name is Amber Roth, and I live in Portland, 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.

I work for Growing Gardens, a non-profit dedicated to connecting school aged children with fresh and healthy food, helping them learn about their food systems and increase healthy food access. I see first hand the impact that free food at schools has on the students and the benefits to their learning and growth. Even with free school food, I see so many children that are subject to hunger, which is a massive detriment to their ability to learn. Food is not only supportive of learning, but also benefits their feelings of safety and belonging at school and in the community. Schools serve as hubs for our community, and providing food for all students is an important and meaningful form of justice and health for students and the community at large.

As food costs skyrocket across the country and food instability grows, it's important to me that we continue to prioritize food access for children and alleviate the burden and cost from families that are struggling to keep other meals on the table at home. Providing school meals for all enables families to recoup the cost of daytime meals for their students, which enables them to invest in other things to keep their families and communities healthy.

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,

Amber Roth

Portland, Oregon- Cully neighborhood

Parent, Garden coordinator and Educator at Growing Gardens, Community organizer and School volunteer