

OREGON HUNGER TASK FORCE

Creating Policies for a Hunger-Free Oregon

To: Senate Committee On Education
From: Chris Baker, Administrator, Oregon Hunger Task Force
RE: Testimony in support of SB 1581, School Meals For All
Date: February 3, 2026

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Chris Baker, and I am the Administrator of the [Oregon Hunger Task Force](#). Created by the Legislature in 1989, the Oregon Hunger Task Force (OHTF) is a legislatively mandated advisory body that brings together lawmakers, state agencies, advocates, service providers, and people with lived experience of hunger. The Task Force serves as a statewide resource to research hunger, coordinate across systems, and recommend policy solutions to reduce food insecurity in Oregon.

The Oregon Hunger Task Force strongly supports SB 1581 as a proven, stabilizing response to the growing food insecurity facing children and families across Oregon. In the wake of federal actions under H.R. 1, including SNAP disruptions, exclusions for immigrant families, and rising healthcare and living costs, household food budgets are under unprecedented strain. SB 1581 ensures that every student has access to healthy meals at school, regardless of income or immigration status, providing a reliable foundation for learning, health, and stability.

Universal school meals reduce a major, recurring household expense by covering breakfast and lunch every school day, particularly benefiting families with multiple children. As food prices continue to rise, school meals act as a buffer that stabilizes family food budgets and frees up limited income for other essentials like rent, utilities, transportation, healthcare, and childcare - costs that are increasing for nearly every Oregon family. For working parents, knowing their children will be fed at school reduces daily logistical burdens and supports workforce participation.

SB 1581 also strengthens food security beyond the school day. When children have guaranteed meals at school, families are better able to stretch food resources at home, reducing reliance on emergency food providers already struggling to meet rising demand. During periods of crisis, such as job loss, illness, or unexpected expenses, universal meals provide a consistent safety net that helps prevent families from falling deeper into hardship. In addition, school meal programs support local economies by keeping dollars circulating in communities and, in many cases, purchasing from local producers.

At a time when federal policy decisions are shifting costs and risk onto states and families, SB 1581 represents a smart, preventative investment that supports children, stabilizes households, and advances long-term food security. The Oregon Hunger Task Force urges your support for SB 1581 as an essential component of Oregon's response to hunger and economic instability.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to the well-being of Oregon's children and families.

Chris Baker
Administrator, Oregon Hunger Task Force
Legislative Strategist, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon