



2/4/2026

TO: Senate Committee on Education
FROM: FoodCorps
SUBJECT: Yes on SB 1581, School Meals for All

Senator Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Committee,

My name is Aaron Poplack, and I am the Oregon Policy and Program Lead at FoodCorps. I am **here today in unequivocal support of SB 1581, School Meals for All**, which would ensure that every child in Oregon can show up nourished and ready to learn at school.

FoodCorps is a national nonprofit working at the intersection of child nutrition and education. For nearly 15 years we have partnered with school districts across Oregon to support nourishing school meals, hands-on food and garden education, and welcoming school cafeterias that set kids up for positive relationships with food.

I'm here today because **cafeterias are classrooms too**. I've seen firsthand what school nutrition programs are capable of when they receive 100% of the federal reimbursement. With that stability, districts can provide high-quality school meals made with **locally sourced ingredients, scratch-cooked recipes**, and engaging experiences that **spark students' curiosity** and become **an anchor point for learning** throughout the day.

That stability also allows districts to involve students and families in menu planning, which research shows increases participation. In the Umatilla School District, FoodCorps members partnered with students to design and taste test a pozole recipe that 98% of the students said they would eat for lunch, and when it was added to the district menu, it was no surprise that meal participation went up. In Redmond, staff gathered high school student feedback during lunch taste tests to develop a new speed scratch pizza recipe, which allowed them to incorporate more local ingredients from Oregon farmers as toppings.

These are the meals and joyful cafeteria experiences that are possible when we eliminate barriers to participation for students, and remove the financial strain of partial reimbursement. I

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urge you to support SB 1581 so that every child can experience accessible, nourishing, and affirming meals at school.

Thank you,
Aaron Poplack
Oregon Policy and Program Lead
FoodCorps