



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

My name is Mica Contreras, and I serve as Executive Director of the Linn Benton Lincoln Health Equity Alliance. I am writing to express my strong support for SB 1581: School Meals for All.

As a Regional Health Equity Coalition, we represent communities that face ongoing barriers to health, stability, and opportunity. Food insecurity, especially for children, is one of the most common and preventable problems. SB 1581 helps by making sure every student can get free breakfast and lunch at school, no matter their family's income.

This bill is an important way to fight hunger during today's affordability crisis. It lets students focus on learning instead of worrying about food. Children who face moderate to severe food insecurity are much more likely to fall behind before school even starts, with their risk of not being ready for school almost four times higher. Hunger is tied to lower grades, more students repeating a grade, weaker math and reading skills, and worse mental and emotional health.

Getting nutritious food is key for health, doing well in school, and long-term well-being. When students can count on healthy meals, they come to school more often, have fewer discipline problems, and do better academically. SB 1581 also reduces administrative burdens for schools by eliminating meal applications, income checks, and the collection of unpaid meal debt. Just as important, it protects students from stigma and meal shaming, helping create school environments based on dignity, equity, and inclusion. Access to food should be a basic human right, and no child or family should be judged or shamed for getting the food they need to learn and grow.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote yes on SB 1581 to ensure no child in Oregon goes hungry at school.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mica Contreras".

Mica Contreras
Executive Director

