

Submitter:

Sarah Davey

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 Sarah Davey, and I live in Eugene, 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.

Working closely with a predominantly low-income community of all ages and backgrounds including being inside elementary schools working alongside students, I have heard heartbreaking statements surrounding food insecurity. One story that has stuck with me is when a kindergarten came up to me in the garden with a small handful of snap peas she had harvested. I exclaimed, "great job harvesting those peas! Are you going to eat them?" She looked at me with a straight face and said "No, I want to bring them home so my dad has something to cook tonight. We don't have a lot of food." It is very possible her only nourishing and balanced meal comes from school. My personal belief is no child should ever have to worry about feeding their family, especially worry about where their next meal is coming from and I am sure we share that same belief. Supporting this measure will undoubtedly make positive change in our youth because it is not just a meal. It is nourishment, it is safety, it is providing energy for children to focus in school, to play at recess, to fight off sicknesses, to cope with anxiety and stress. Because one less thing to worry about will create more opportunity for something better. It is not just a meal. It is nourishing life.

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,
Sarah Davey
Eugene, OR
Educator