



6 February 2026

Senate Committee on Education  
Oregon Legislature

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

RE: Senate Bill 1581 - Support

My name is Jimmy Jones, and I am the Executive Director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency (MWVCAA) in Salem. At MWVCAA, we serve low-income residents of Marion, Polk, and nine other counties across Oregon. Annually, MWVCAA administers more than \$80 million in services and direct assistance supporting housing stability, homelessness response, energy and weatherization, and early learning programs for tens of thousands of Oregonians.

In addition, I serve as Vice President for Legislative Affairs at the Community Action Partnership of Oregon (CAPO), sit on the Housing Committee of the Racial Justice Council, previously served on the House Bill 2100 Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities, and recently chaired the Legislature's Joint Task Force on Hospital Discharge.

I am writing to express strong support for Senate Bill 1581, which would ensure that all Oregon students have access to breakfast and lunch at no charge, regardless of household income.

Oregon is facing record levels of food insecurity. With rising costs, many families are being forced to make impossible choices between groceries, rent, healthcare, and other essentials. The Oregon Food Bank reports that visits to food assistance sites have reached historic highs in recent years, demonstrating the growing need for coordinated policy solutions that address hunger at its root.

Child hunger remains especially urgent. According to No Kid Hungry Oregon, more than 22% of children in our state live in food-insecure households, meaning their families do not always have reliable access to enough nutritious food for a healthy life. This reality directly impacts children's ability to concentrate, learn, and thrive at school. Universal school meals, as proposed by Senate Bill 1581, would ensure that every student can access nutritious meals at school every day, helping improve academic outcomes and remove the stigma that can discourage participation in traditional free and reduced-price meal programs. Senate Bill 1581 also eliminates the administrative barrier of meal applications and reduced-price billing, saving schools time and resources.

MWVCAA works alongside hardworking families throughout the Mid-Willamette Valley, and we see firsthand how hunger undermines health, stability, and opportunity. Senate Bill 1581 will help level the playing field, by ensuring that every child, in every community, can come to school ready to learn, supported with dignity and care, while also freeing up limited family resources for other essentials like rent, utilities, and healthcare.

For these reasons, we urge the Legislature to pass Senate Bill 1581 and ensure Oregon is among the national leaders advancing universal school meal access.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Oregon's children and families.

Respectfully,

Jimmy Jones  
Executive Director