

Submitter: Andrea Robinson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1581

When we speak of the function of the state government, we, under the laws of both our state and federal government, entrust the governing judicial, legislative, and executive bodies to act in the citizens' best interest to sustain and improve our society. One's ability to adequately contribute to a functioning state and society is certainly impacted by their ability to access nourishing and complete meals.

If Article I Section 47 of our state Constitution cites the "right to affordable health care. (1) It is the obligation of the state to ensure that every resident of Oregon has access to cost-effective, clinically appropriate and affordable health care as a fundamental right," it is insinuated that access to health care and subsequently, maintenance of ones health, is an inherent right as an Oregon state resident. "Affordable" in the context of section 47 is a subjective term that must be taken on a case-by-case basis, or, more broadly, by economic bracket.

OR SB 1581 offers to expand our definition of accessible healthcare as inclusive of a right to accessible health maintenance. This bill would remove barriers for Oregon's youth in order to access nutritious meals, and, furthermore, acts to support an unprotected class of individuals (minors) who are not able to yet sustain economic independence nor engage in full, political rights that most adult citizens maintain.

I reference the start of this bill as part of my reasoning as to why I am in support of it as an Oregon state resident:

"Whereas access to nutritious meals is essential for the health, well-being and academic success of all students; and Whereas hunger and food insecurity negatively impact students' ability to concentrate, learn and thrive in school environments; and Whereas one in six children in Oregon lives in a household that struggles with food insecurity, and many more face intermittent hunger throughout the school year."

As residents, as adults with political power who pay into state and federal taxes for state welfare programs, and broader programs that support the maintenance and functions of our society, I do believe it to be our civic duty to ensure that future generations are able to maintain their well-being while obtaining their basic education. As a mere young adult myself, I remember firsthand how hunger impacted my ability to focus and properly engage in my education. While I came from a middle-class family, we were not immune to struggling with food access; my family was still at mercy of the buying power of the dollar.

As we find ourselves with a record number of layoffs, job insecurity, and a rise in the "gig economy," I encourage us to utilize whatever means necessary in order to ensure the food security of Oregon residents for generations to come. This must be our priority. This bill must pass.