

Submitter: Michael Abrams
On Behalf Of: Myself
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1581

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

Thank you for considering SB 1581, and thank you to Senator Neron Misslin for championing this vital piece of legislation. School Meals for All represents much more than meals. I don't think I can do a better job than the preamble to the bill in explaining how ensuring all school children have access to nutritious breakfasts and lunches, regardless of their socio-economic position, is transformative. From the stigma associated with reduced or free school meals to the long-term health effects of chronically skipping meals--to say nothing of how hard it is learn on an empty stomach--universal school meals affects so much.

I would not have been the successful student I was without having breakfast every morning and lunch every day. I was privileged enough to be part of a family that could afford groceries no matter what. My mother almost always packed my lunch, and while I often missed out on pizza, I was never hungry. I look back and think about how many of my peers were not so lucky. And the impact that had--and still could have, decades later--on their health and well-being.

Educational inequality is one of this country's and state's greatest challenges. For far too long, our zip code determines far too much about the quality of our schools and our educational and life opportunities that are directly based on that. SB 1581 is a big step in the direction of correcting that injustice in Oregon, starting with the basics--breakfast and lunch. I urge you to vote yes and send this to the floor with a do pass recommendation.