

Submitter: Melissa Mettler
On Behalf Of: SB 1581
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 Melissa Mettler and I live in The Dalles, 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.

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.

In my own community of The Dalles I have seen the need for students to have access to meals at no cost. Many students would not eat if there were no breakfast or lunch offered at school. During the pandemic my own family benefited from the relief that school lunches provided to our strained financial resources. With inflation costs continually rising, it's more important than ever to ensure school meals are available to all.

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,
Melissa Mettler
The Dalles, OR
Parent