



Partners for a
Hunger-Free Oregon

Ending hunger before it begins.

To: House Committee on Rules
From: Matt Newell-Ching, Public Affairs Director
Subject: Statement of Support for HB 3454 to stop shaming school meal shaming
Date: May 25, 2017

No child should experience shame for eating meals at school.

One in four kids in Oregon lives in a family that is at risk of hunger. Not only are school meals one of our best tools to end child hunger and keep kids healthy, but students who eat breakfast at school are more likely to have better attendance records and graduate high school.

Despite the many benefits of school meals for kids at all income levels, we hear time and time again from students that there is stigma associated with school meals. By reducing unnecessary shame, more of Oregon's students will receive the nutrition they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

We support HB 3454 which takes measures to eliminate school meal shaming by:

- Prohibiting schools from placing "hand stamps" or other overt identification of kids with unpaid meal balances, which has a stigmatizing effect;
- Prohibiting throwing away a meal that has been served if a student reaches the point-of-purchase but can't pay;
- Ensuring that attempts are made to connect parents with unpaid meal balances with school meal applications and other needed assistance;
- Ensuring that efforts to collect unpaid debts are communicated directly with parents.

The bill is modeled after similar legislation passed in New Mexico earlier this year.

In addition, we believe that Oregon should explore ways to reduce shaming by helping and incentivizing eligible schools to participate in the **Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)**, a federal program that allows high-poverty schools to serve meals to all students at no charge. The reimbursement formula for CEP is based on a school's percentage of identified students who are likely to be eligible for school meals. CEP helps students succeed in the classroom, creates a healthy school environment, reduces stigma, eliminates a benefit cliff, and eliminates the need to handle applications and act as collection agencies. Oregon should explore ways to incentivize more eligible schools to participate.