



PRESS RELEASE

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House Passes Expansion of Free Lunch for Low-Income Kids

Students who currently qualify for reduced-price lunch will now qualify for free lunch

Today, the Oregon House of Representatives voted 58-1 to pass House Bill 2545, which expands the free lunch program to include students who currently qualify for reduced-price lunch.

The bill will ensure that all kids can learn with a full stomach, and will keep school administrators from having to play the role of collections agents. Funding for expansion of the program was included in the K-12 education bill, which passed the House in March.

“We had heart-breaking testimony on the need for this investment in the House Education Committee,” said Rep. Margaret Doherty (D-Tigard). “When students are hungry they aren't able to learn.”

HB 2545 will mean that kids won't feel like they're singled out based on their lunch payment program.

“Many have spoken to the stigma of ‘emergency lunches’ where they receive what I call the ‘Scarlet Sandwich’—two pieces of bread with a slice of cheese in between,” says Rep. David Gomberg (Lincoln City). “At a time where students are trying to fit in amongst their peers, we are singling them out and telling them that they are different; that they are somehow less deserving than their classmates.”

The \$2.39 million appropriation will bring in an estimated \$5.1 million in additional federal dollars, and will ensure food safety and security for thousands of Oregon school kids.

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