



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature
State Capitol
Salem, OR

NEWS RELEASE

July 3, 2017

CONTACT: Rick Osborn (503) 986-1074
Rick.osborn@oregonlegislature.gov

Senate sends bill to governor that will end ‘lunch shaming’ *HB 3454 requires school districts to feed kids lunch, regardless of ability to pay*

SALEM – No child should be forced to go hungry, and they should be able to eat with dignity. The Oregon Senate voted to send a bill to the governor that will ensure that is the case for students all over the state.

House Bill 3454 – which passed the Senate today on a 29-0 vote – requires National School Lunch Program-participating school districts to provide lunch to any student upon request, regardless of whether the student has money to pay or owes money. It also prohibits schools from “lunch shaming” – the practice of serving alternative meals to students who cannot pay for the meal, requiring students to throw away food after it has been served or other tactics that stigmatize students.

“A hungry child can’t focus, and that leads to challenges in their learning, behavior and focus,” said Sen. Arnie Roblan (D-Coos Bay), who carried the bill in the Senate. “This is a simple matter of compassion and humanity. Sometimes kids or their parents forget to send money for lunches. Sometimes they can’t afford it. Other children notice this and it can create an unfair stigma and embarrassment for the child. They need to eat and they deserve to do that without fear of being made fun of by their peers.”

Lunch shaming is a far too common practice where students are held publicly accountable for unpaid school lunch debt. These practices include forcing students to throw food away, providing alternative meals or stigmatizing those students in other ways. A 2014 United States Department of Agriculture report found that nearly half of all school districts used some form of shaming to compel parents to pay lunch debts.

The National School Lunch Program is a federally subsidized meal program operating in more than 100,000 public and non-profit private schools and residential child care institutions. In 2012, it provided nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to more than 31 million children each school day.

Participating schools receive cash subsidies from the United States Department of Agriculture for each meal that is served. In return, the schools must serve lunches that meet federal nutritional and other requirements. Participating schools also must offer free lunches to eligible children, and any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through the program.

To qualify for lunches at no cost to the student or their family, the family income must fall below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. Children from families with incomes that are more than 185 percent of the federal poverty level pay full price.

Approximately one in four children in Oregon lives in a family that is at risk of hunger, according to Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon. School lunches are one of the best tools to battle child hunger and keep kids healthy. Students who eat breakfast at school, as well, are more likely to have better attendance and graduate from high school.

“No child should be punished by withholding food for any reason, let alone a student’s parents’ ability to pay,” Roblan said. “A well-fed kid is a healthy student. When a student has access to nutritious meals, he or she can learn, focus and perform well in school. This bill is good for kids and their educational process. It’s good for educational outcomes. It’s the fair, humane and compassionate thing to do. Simply put, it’s the right thing to do.”

House Bill 3454 now goes to Gov. Kate Brown for her signature.

###