

To: Chair Doherty and Members of the House Committee on Education

From: Peggy Samolinski, Director, Youth & Family Services Division

Date: February 25, 2019

RE: Support for House Bill 2760

Dear Chair Doherty and Members of the House Committee on Education,

I am writing in support of HB 2760 to establish the Universal School Meal Account so that all students in Oregon schools have the opportunity to eat breakfast and lunch at no charge.

Multnomah County schools educate 93,000 students per year. Research indicates these students have a better chance of succeeding in academics and life when they have nutritious school meals. Our county has 113,950 people who lack consistent access to adequate food. Many families who experience food insecurity earn just a little too much to qualify for free meals at schools. Universal meals eliminate this “benefits cliff” so that students could receive meals no matter what their household earns.

Offering universal meals in schools leads to more students taking part in school breakfast and lunch. Multnomah County’s largest district, Portland Public Schools, saw an unprecedented rise in high school students taking and eating school meals when several PPS high schools offered universal meals through the federal Community Eligibility Provision. If meals are offered to all students, there is significantly less stigma associated with taking a meal.

I support your efforts to improve access to school meals for Oregonians and appreciate your work on HB 2760. Let’s create a level playing field for all students in Oregon’s school cafeterias.

Thank you,

Peggy Samolinski, Director
Youth & Family Services Division