

Statement of Opponecy for the “Public Education Iodine Access” Act (HB: ECU-503)

By: Alexis Horton (ORU)

Lobbyist for the Oklahoma Intercollegiate Legislature (O.I.L.)

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Overview

Members of the Oklahoma Intercollegiate Legislature, I am asking you today to oppose House Bill ECU-503, the “Public Education Iodine Access” Act. While well-intended, this bill creates a regulatory fix for a problem that is not widespread, not urgent, and not significant enough to justify state-level intervention.

Yes, iodine is an important nutrient. Yes, we all support student health. But the solution proposed in this bill does far more than encourage nutrition it adds unnecessary requirements, increases oversight burdens, and misdirects our attention away from the real challenges in Oklahoma public schools.

This is an overextended legislative attempt to address an issue that simply does not rise to the level of statutory action.

Why This Bill Is Not Needed

The entire premise of the bill is based on the assumption that iodine deficiency is a major concern within state education programs. But nothing in current research or public health data suggests that Oklahoma students are facing an iodine crisis.

In fact:

- Iodine is already widely consumed in everyday foods such as dairy, bread, eggs, and processed meals.

- Most salt used in public cafeterias is already iodized by default.
- There is no statewide trend indicating iodine-related health issues in school-aged children.

Given the multitude of urgent issues facing public schools teacher shortages, underfunded meal programs, mental health needs iodine levels simply do not fall into the category that requires new regulation, enforcement, or inspection standards.

When we legislate a problem that doesn't exist, we create solutions that cause more harm than good.

Concerns: Why This Bill Creates Unnecessary Burdens

This bill may appear small, but the ripple effects are significant:

1. It adds another layer to food safety inspections.

Inspectors already follow extensive guidelines. Asking them to now evaluate whether “20% of items served” meet iodine standards introduces a vague, unenforceable metric. How do you determine iodine content for every menu item without lab analysis?

2. It burdens school cafeteria staff.

Food service workers are already working with limited budgets and tight schedules. Requiring them to track iodine-related compliance adds complexity without offering support or funding.

3. It creates vague and confusing compliance expectations.

What constitutes “items served”? Every menu item? Every ingredient? Every portion? The bill does not say, and that ambiguity invites inconsistent enforcement and compliance issues.

4. It overregulates something that already exists.

Schools are not refusing to provide iodized salt. This bill mandates a requirement for a product that is already accessible and widely used. Creating a law for what is already happening is redundant and wasteful.

Why This Approach Misses the Point

If the true aim is to improve nutrition education or promote balanced diets, there are better ways to achieve that goal:

- Offer guidance through the Department of Health.
- Encourage voluntary best practices.
- Provide nutritional literacy programs for students.
- Increase support for school meal budgeting and variety.

Instead, this bill jumps straight to regulation and oversight for a micronutrient issue that is neither widespread nor pressing.

Our schools do not need more requirements; they need more resources.

Conclusion

Delegates, HB ECU-503 is well-meaning, but not well-designed. It adds oversight where oversight is not needed. It complicates inspections that are already complex. And it frames iodine levels as a statewide crisis when evidence shows otherwise.

1. We should not legislate what is already common practice.
2. We should not burden schools with requirements that offer no measurable benefit.
3. We should not prioritize iodine levels over the real, pressing needs of Oklahoma students.

For these reasons, this bill does not strengthen public health, does not support public schools, and does not represent responsible policymaking.

Members, this bill does not deserve your vote.

