

Healthy School Meals for All

School meals play an important role in reducing childhood hunger, supporting good nutrition, and ensuring that students are hunger-free and ready to get the most out of their school day.

Research links participation in school meals to positive educational and health outcomes for our nation's children. School meals are just as important to academic success as textbooks, computers, and transportation, and all children should have access to them every school day.

As vital as the school nutrition programs are to ensuring children's access to healthy, nutritious meals, too many children in need miss out because of the programs' current structure. Many struggling families do not meet the eligibility threshold for free meals, which requires a family of three to earn less than \$30,000 annually.

Healthy School Meals for All means offering school breakfast and lunch to all students at no charge, so they can learn and thrive. Serving school meals to all students at no cost on a permanent basis would be a game changer for students, families, and schools. Providing school meals to all students is also critical for advancing racial equity and justice, helping to ensure that all students can access the key nutrition they need to thrive in the classroom and beyond.

In response to the pandemic, Congress took immediate action to support access to school meals, and schools were able to offer free meals to all students. For more than two years, our country had the opportunity to pilot nationwide free school meals, and it was a resounding success.

Please support Healthy School Meals for All by:

- weighing in with Leadership and Appropriators in support of funding Healthy School Meals for All for fiscal year 2024;
- cosponsoring the **Universal School Meals Program Act**, which would create Healthy School Meals for All nationwide. The bill is being reintroduced by Senator Sanders (I-VT) and Representative Omar (D-MN), along with Senators Gillibrand (D-NY) and Heinrich (D-NM) and Representatives McGovern (D-MA) and Moore (D-WI); and
- cosponsoring bills to increase participation in the Community Eligibility Provision, which allows high-need schools to offer free meals to all students. These bills include the **School Meals Expansion Act** (Representative McGarvey (D-KY)), [H.R. 2567](#), which would increase federal funding for community eligibility schools and make more schools eligible; the **No Hungry Kids in School Act** (Representatives Porter (D-CA) and Aguilar (D-CA)), which would create a statewide community eligibility option and the **Expanding Access to School Meals Act** (Representative Porter (D-CA)), which would increase eligibility for free meals to 200 percent and expand direct certification, resulting in increased federal funding for community eligibility schools and better access to school meals for struggling families. The No Hungry Kids in School Act and Expanding Access to School Meals Act have just been introduced and the bill numbers are not yet available.

Benefits of Providing Free Meals to All Students:



ENSURES ALL STUDENTS
ARE HUNGER-FREE
AND READY TO LEARN



REDUCES STIGMA
ASSOCIATED WITH
EATING SCHOOL MEALS



ENDS THE PROBLEM
OF UNPAID
SCHOOL MEAL DEBT



EASES
ADMINISTRATIVE
BURDENS FOR SCHOOLS



SUPPORTS SCHOOL
NUTRITION FINANCES
AND OPERATIONS

Learn more at www.FreeSchoolMealsforAll.org