

School meals for all students at no cost

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

The results are indisputable. When kids get the nourishment they need during the school day, they perform better in the classroom. Attendance and math scores go up, tardiness and the number of kids repeating a grade go down.



Yet 1 in 6 children in Minnesota experiences food insecurity.



This means they don't get enough food on a regular basis. Yes, families can apply to the Free and Reduced Price School Meal program, which provides no-cost meals to those who qualify.



But 1 in 4 food-insecure kids comes from a household that doesn't qualify for support.

This leaves out many families struggling to make ends meet.

Even families that do qualify don't always use the program. For some the paperwork is simply too burdensome or difficult to complete. Busy, stressed, and working parents need an easier helping hand.



HOW SCHOOL MEALS FOR ALL HELPS EVERYONE

When school meals are provided at no cost to all students, these hungry kids no longer fall through the cracks. They consistently get nutritious food that sustains their energy and focus in the classroom.

And the benefits don't stop there. So many others stand to gain when school meals are free for all.

Working families – Families will no longer need to meet rigid low-income guidelines in order to access free meals. Those who struggle to pay for groceries and school meals can use that money for other essential expenses.

All students – Not only will hungry kids be fed, but when all students have equal access to the same meal, we take the sting out of food stigma. More students will feel less shame about school meals – and won't hesitate to get the food they need.

School nutritionists – Without the administrative burden of the Free and Reduced Price program – different cards, different lines, different reporting requirements – they can streamline meal service to feed more kids more efficiently.

Now's the time to pass HF1729



Since mid-2020, federal pandemic aid has allowed all public schools to provide school meals to all students at no cost. This has been invaluable in helping schools and families feed kids through the upheavals of shutdowns, remote schooling, employment uncertainty, and isolation periods. But this aid is set to expire at the end of the school year in 2022 – in just a few months. If we don't act now to pass HF1729 and make school meals for all permanent, more than half a million kids in Minnesota will lose crucial access to meals and slide back into hunger.

LEARN ABOUT THE HUNGER-FREE SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN

Endorsing partners include Allina Health, American Diabetes Association, Appetite for Change, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Children's Minnesota, EdAllies, Education Minnesota, Every Meal, Food Research and Action Center, General Mills, Hunger Solutions Minnesota, MAZON, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, Minnesota School Social Workers Association, Second Harvest Heartland, Share Our Strength, The Food Group, Twin Cities Medical Society and Youthprise.

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