

# HF 1985 (Jordan)/ SF 1902 (Duckworth): Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

OFFERING SCHOOL MEALS TO MORE MINNESOTA STUDENTS

## Hungry kids can't learn.

When kids lack the nourishment they need during the school day, they struggle to perform in the classroom. Attendance and math scores suffer and the number of kids repeating a grade go up.



**Yet 1 in 6 children in Minnesota experiences food insecurity.**

This means they don't get enough food on a regular basis.



**1 in 4 food-insecure kids is from a household that doesn't qualify for help with school meals - yet the family still struggles to make ends meet.**

Thankfully, Federal resources are already available to help close this gap through the Community Eligibility Provision, or CEP.



## WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY PROVISION (CEP)

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a federal program that reimburses schools and school districts in low-income areas for the cost of school meals. These schools can offer breakfast and lunch to all students at no cost.

Schools that qualify for CEP get partial to full federal reimbursement for the cost of providing school meals. This means the school can provide no-cost meals to all students with less paperwork and more streamlined meal service. **More importantly, it means free school meals for all – including food-insecure students who don't qualify for free school meals.**

A school's eligibility for CEP depends on its "identified student percentage" (ISP). The ISP is the portion of a school's students who automatically qualify for free meals because they're enrolled in SNAP or TANF, they're experiencing homelessness, or they're in foster care or Head Start. CEP eligible schools must have an ISP of at least 40% to participate. At 62.5% the Federal government will reimburse the full cost of all meals.



## WHY WE NEED THE CEP BILL (HF 1985 / SF 1902)

### We're missing opportunities to feed more kids:

- We're leaving millions of dollars in federal resources on the table
- Minnesota ranks 47th in the nation in CEP participation
- Only 50% of eligible schools in the state take advantage of the program



### HF 1985 / SF 1902 takes a big leap forward in our use of CEP:

- Requires all schools that are eligible for full reimbursement to participate in CEP
- Provides technical support to help schools efficiently roll out the program
- Allows flexibility in how schools measure student poverty to secure supplemental state aid, reducing the administrative burden

## Now's the time to embrace CEP

In early 2020, the federal government began providing universal free meals as part of its pandemic aid. Students across the state have been getting consistent, worry-free meals to fuel long days of learning. This aid is set to expire at the end of the school year in 2022.

Now is the time to pass HF 1985/ SF 1902 to fully leverage CEP. This bill provides needed continuity in nourishment and peace of mind for families. Without this bill and in the midst of an ongoing pandemic and continuing economic stress, many families will be forced to scramble when meal aid ends – and many Minnesota students will be hungry once again.

### 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.

For more information contact Leah Gardner,  
[lgardner@hungersolutions.org](mailto:lgardner@hungersolutions.org),  
651-789-9850

