

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. And some kids who qualify fear the stigma around free meals and will go hungry to avoid it.

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 – Staff can focus on feeding kids well instead of collecting payments—reducing the administrative burden and making meal service more efficient.

Now's the time to pass HF5/SF 123



When federal pandemic aid allowed all public schools to provide school meals to all students at no cost, participation in school meals increased. Children enjoyed a greater sense of community in the lunchroom and parents had some relief in the midst of record high food prices. As families return to the broken system of needing to pay for meals they can't afford, districts are seeing meal debts reach new levels. By investing in free school meals for all students, we can fuel young minds and move towards an more equitable Minnesota.

LEARN ABOUT THE HUNGER-FREE SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN

Endorsing partners include Advocates for Better Health, Allina Health, American Diabetes Association, Appetite for Change, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Cargill, Children's Minnesota, EdAllies, Education Minnesota, Every Meal, Food Research and Action Center, General Mills, Hunger Solutions Minnesota, Land O'Lakes, Inc., Land Stewardship Project, Local Public Health Association, MAZON, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, Minnesota Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics, Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota School Social Workers Association, Multicultural Autism Action Network, Second Harvest Heartland, SEIU 284, Share Our Strength, The Food Group, and Youthprise.

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