

COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY SUPPORTS CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND LEARNING

In **HAWAII**, approximately **44,000** children live in food-insecure households, jeopardizing their health and well-being.¹

School meal programs combat food insecurity by providing millions of children with the nutrition they need to learn and thrive.

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is an option within the school meal programs that increases students' access to nutritious food by allowing schools and school districts serving large numbers of children from families with low incomes to offer meals at no charge to all students.

How CEP Schools Are Reimbursed

Rather than relying on school meal applications to determine a school's federal reimbursements, CEP schools are reimbursed based on the share of students who are automatically eligible for free school meals without an application because they meet specific criteria, such as being in foster care or participating in certain federal means-tested programs, including SNAP. Schools can adopt CEP if at least 25 percent of students meet these criteria. The more students who are automatically eligible for free school meals, the more federal reimbursement CEP schools receive.

CEP Is a Win for Students, Families, and Schools

CEP provides all students access to the balanced school breakfasts and lunches they need to be well-nourished and ready to learn, while reducing the stigma often present in school cafeterias when schools have to track students' eligibility for free, reduced-price, and paid meals.

When students have access to free meals at school, families have lower grocery bills and more money in their household budgets to help make ends meet.

CEP makes school meal operations more efficient and effective for schools and districts. CEP eliminates the administrative burden associated with school meal applications, strengthens program integrity, and supports school nutrition finances by eliminating school meal debt and increasing participation in school breakfast and lunch programs, which allows for economies of scale.

In the 2024–2025 school year, 74 percent of eligible schools nationwide adopted CEP. These 54,000 schools reached more than 27 million students around the country.



In the 2024–2025 school year:

115 SCHOOLS

in **HAWAII** adopted CEP.

An additional **71** schools were eligible to adopt CEP but did not participate.

THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) CUTS

recently enacted in H.R. 1 will **exacerbate food insecurity** and have ripple effects for the school meal programs, including threatening schools' ability to implement CEP.

As children lose access to SNAP, their automatic eligibility for free school meals is severed and federal reimbursement for meals served in CEP schools decreases, jeopardizing the program's financial viability.

In **HAWAII**, during the 2024–2025 school year:

 **4,214**

children ate a school lunch and **2,018** children ate a school breakfast on an average school day.²



13

school districts adopted CEP for some or all schools. An additional **1** school district had schools that were eligible to adopt CEP but did not participate.



49,164

children attended schools that adopted CEP.

By repealing SNAP cuts and investing in CEP, policymakers can reduce barriers that keep eligible children from receiving free school meals and help families afford to put food on the table.

¹ Analysis of 2022–2023 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement, rounded to the nearest 1,000. The data for this analysis was pooled across multiple years to ensure adequate sample sizes for every state. As a result, cross-state comparisons using multiple fact sheets may cover different time periods.

² Average daily participation data for school breakfast and lunch are reflective of April 2025. U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2025). State-level table current activity. Accessed September 24, 2025. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>

The following table identifies the school districts in each of **HAWAII'S** congressional districts that contain CEP-eligible and participating schools, as well as the number of children enrolled in CEP schools for the 2024–2025 school year.³

School District	Number of CEP-Eligible Schools	Number of CEP-Participating Schools	Students Enrolled in CEP-Participating Schools
Congressional District #1			
DOE SCHOOL FOOD SERVICES BRANCH	164	94	44,091
Congressional District #2			
DOE SCHOOL FOOD SERVICES BRANCH	164	94	44,091
CONNECTIONS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL	1	1	352
Unassigned School Districts			
Not all school districts could be matched to congressional districts due to data inconsistencies			
HAWAII ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCE PCS	1	1	710
HO'OKĀKO'O SCHOOLS	3	3	1,495
KA 'UIMEKE KA'EO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL	3	3	296
KA WAIHONA O KA NA'AUAO PCS	1	1	623
KE ANA LA'AHANA PCS	1	1	24
KE KULA NI'IIHAU O KEKAHA LEARNING CENTER PCS	1	1	59
KE KULA 'O NAWAHIOKALANI'OPU'U IKI LABORATORY PCS	3	3	534
KUA 'O KA LA PCS	2	2	196
LAUPAHOEHOE COMMUNITY PCS	1	1	333
MALAMA HONUA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL	1	0	
NA WAI OLA PCS	1	1	108
VOLCANO SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES PCS	3	3	343

NOTE: School districts, rather than individual schools, are listed under congressional districts. If a school district crosses congressional district boundaries, all of their schools and children are included in each congressional district. Not all school districts could be matched to congressional districts due to inconsistencies in how the data sources numerically identify and name school districts and schools. Unmatched school districts are listed as unassigned.

³ Food Research & Action Center. (2025). Community Eligibility Provision database for the 2024–2025 school year. <https://frac.org/community-eligibility-database/>. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Common core of data for the 2023–2024 school year. <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/files.asp>; and NCES. School district geographic relationship files for the 119th Congress. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/geographic/relationshipfiles>