

SCHOOL MEALS SUPPORT CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND LEARNING

Proposed Cuts to School Meals Would Worsen Childhood Hunger, Hurt Struggling Families, and Create Unnecessary Burdens for **557** Schools in **COLORADO**

House Budget Committee Chair Jodey Arrington (R-TX) has proposed \$12 billion in cuts to school meals programs for the 2025 budget reconciliation. The proposals would substantially decrease the number of schools eligible for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and make it harder for eligible families to apply for free or reduced-price school meals at non-CEP schools. Combined, these proposals would reduce students' access to school meals and raise families' grocery bills, while imposing unnecessary and burdensome paperwork requirements on schools in **COLORADO**.

What Is Community Eligibility?

CEP allows schools serving large numbers of children from families with low incomes to offer school meals at no charge to all students. Rather than relying on school meal applications to determine a school's federal reimbursements, CEP schools are reimbursed based on the share of students from families with low incomes, as determined through a data-matching process that identifies students' participation in other means-tested programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Currently, schools can adopt CEP if at least 25 percent of students receive these benefits.

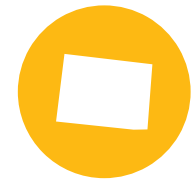
CONGRESS MUST REJECT ANY PROPOSAL TO WEAKEN CEP

Chair Arrington's proposal would increase the CEP eligibility threshold for schools from **25** percent to **60** percent of students identified as receiving benefits. This would cut over 24,000 schools nationwide from participating in CEP and undermine the health and learning of more than **12 million children**.

Community Eligibility Supports Students, Families, and Schools

CEP is a win for students, families, and schools. CEP gives all students access to the nutritious 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 has grown in popularity since first becoming available nationwide over a decade ago. In the 2023–2024 school year, one out of every two schools that operated the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) participated in CEP. CEP makes school meal operations more efficient and effective: It 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, which allows for economies of scale.



IN 2023–2024 SCHOOL YEAR

588 SCHOOLS

in **COLORADO** — which represents **33** percent of schools that participate in the school lunch program — adopted CEP, reaching **217,348** children each school day.

The proposed cuts to school meals would **increase hardships** for children and families across **COLORADO**:



557

schools in COLORADO would no longer be able to provide free school meals through CEP and would have to reinstate meal applications.



64

school districts in COLORADO, listed on the reverse page, would be affected.



206,293

COLORADO children attend schools that would no longer be able to offer meals at no charge to all students through CEP.¹

Rather than reducing access to school meals, **CONGRESS SHOULD INVEST IN CEP** and reduce barriers to applying for free or reduced-price school meals, so families can afford groceries and children have access to the nutritious meals they need to thrive in school and beyond.

The following table identifies the school districts in **COLORADO**, and the number of schools and children within each district that would lose access to CEP if Congress increases the eligibility threshold to 60 percent of students identified as receiving benefits.

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS	19	8796
ADAMS COUNTY 14	10	4983
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28J	53	30293
AGATE 300	2	83
AGUILAR REORGANIZED 6	2	107
ALAMOSA RE-11J	4	1650
ALAMOSA COUNTY SCHOOL DIST # 11J	1	448
AULT-HIGHLAND RE-9	1	485
BETHUNE R-5	1	115
BOULDER VALLEY RE 2	4	1174
BURLINGTON RE-6J	3	755
CANON CITY RE-1	6	1947
CENTER 26 JT	4	565
CHARTERCHOICE COLLABORATIVE	11	3945
CHERRY CREEK 5	7	3614
COLORADO SPRINGS 11	44	17502
COTOPAXI RE-3	3	167
CRIPPLE CREEK-VICTOR RE-1	2	308
CROWLEY COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT RE 1-J	2	408
DELTA COUNTY 50(J)	5	1459
DENVER COUNTY 1	131	46920
DURANGO 9-R	4	317
EAGLE COUNTY RE 50	1	111
EAST OTERO SCHOOL DISTRICT R-1	3	1206
EDISON 54 JT	2	59

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
ELLICOTT 22	1	506
ENGLEWOOD 1	4	993
ENGLEWOOD 1	1	232
FORT MORGAN RE-3	6	2319
FOUNTAIN 8	3	1166
FREMONT RE-2	2	1088
GRANADA RE-1	2	208
GREELEY 6	21	11062
HANOVER SCHOOL DISTRICT 28	2	268
HARRISON 2	18	7800
JEFFERSON COUNTY R-1	25	7247
JULESBURG RE-1	1	128
LAMAR RE-2	6	1504
MANZANOLA 3J	2	155
MAPLETON 1	5	1436
MESA COUNTY VALLEY 51	20	7952
MIAMI/YODER 60 JT	2	268
MOFFAT 2	2	210
MONTE VISTA C-8	5	987
MONTEZUMA-CORTEZ RE-1	9	2443
MONTROSE COUNTY RE-1J	4	978
MORGRIDGE ACADEMY	1	55
MOUNTAIN VALLEY RE 1	1	131
NORTH CONEJOS RE-1J	1	31
POUDRE R-1	13	4583

The following table identifies the school districts in **COLORADO**, and the number of schools and children within each district that would lose access to CEP if Congress increases the eligibility threshold to 60 percent of students identified as receiving benefits.

(continued)

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
PUEBLO CITY 60	10	5874
PUEBLO COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 70	10	2942
ROCKY FORD R-2	3	629
SHERIDAN 2	5	1138
SIERRA GRANDE R-30	1	265
SILVERTON 1	3	87
SOUTH CONEJOS RE-10	3	166
SPRINGFIELD RE-4	2	293
STATE OF COLORADO, CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE	2	144
THOMPSON R2-J	12	3355
TRINIDAD 1	3	790
VALLEY RE-1	3	1153
WESTMINSTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS	17	8060
YUMA 1	1	230