

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 **1,175** Schools in **FLORIDA**

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 **FLORIDA**.

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

2,887 SCHOOLS

in **FLORIDA** — which represents **74** percent of schools that participate in the school lunch program — adopted CEP, reaching **2,111,632** children each school day.

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



1,175 schools in **FLORIDA** would no longer be able to provide free school meals through CEP and would have to reinstate meal applications.



67 school districts in **FLORIDA**, listed on the reverse page, would be affected.



1,014,942 **FLORIDA** 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 **FLORIDA**, 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
ADVANCED LEARNING CHARTER SCHOOL, INC.	1	850
ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION FOUNDATION	1	100
AVANT GARDE ACADEMY FOUNDATION, INC	2	2060
BAIS CHAYA INC.	1	114
BAKER COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	5	4152
BREVARD COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	22	13560
BROWARD COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	12	17356
BURNS SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CHARTER SCHOOL	1	977
CHABAD HEBREW ACADEMY INC	2	685
CITY OF KISSIMMEE	1	754
CLAY COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	20	14877
COLLIER COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	58	43141
DUVAL COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	151	124193
FLAGLER COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	9	12718
FRANKLIN ACADEMY FOUNDATION INC.	2	2200
GATEWAY CHRISTIAN INC.	1	116
GILCHRIST COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	4	2825
GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN SCHOOL	1	235
GULF COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	4	1921
HERNANDO COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	6	4722
HOLMES COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	7	3191
IMAGINE SCHOOL AT TOWN CENTER	1	896
IMAGINE SCHOOLS AT WEST MELBOURNE	1	601
IMPACT CHRISTIAN ACADEMY, INC.	1	276
JACKSON COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	12	7403

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
JACKSONVILLE CLASSICAL ACADEMY	1	960
JACKSONVILLE CLASSICAL ACADEMY EAST	1	215
JUBILEE CHRISTIAN CENTER OF PENSACOLA, INC.	1	214
LAKE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	45	41914
LEON COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	20	12223
LEVY COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	2	1312
LIBERTY COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	5	1239
LIFE ASSEMBLY OF GOD	1	350
LONGWOOD CHRISTIAN ACADEMY	1	134
NEW LIFE CHARTER ACADEMIES INC.	1	109
NEW LIFE EMPOWERMENT SERVICES, INC.	1	70
NORTH BROWARD CHRISTIAN SCHOOL OF FLORIDA, INC.	1	186
NORTH DADE REGIONAL ACADEMY, INC	1	89
OAK CREEK CHARTER SCHOOL OF BONITA SPRINGS	1	624
ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL, INC.	2	2809
ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	228	237686
OSCEOLA COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	11	10918
PALM BEACH S.D.A. BILINGUAL SCHOOL	1	182
PASCO COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	95	82151
PHOENIX ACADEMY OF EXCELLENCE	2	102
PHOENIX TREE EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION, INC.	1	99
PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	118	72755
READING EDGE ACADEMY, INC.	1	140
REFINE THERAPEUTIC LEARNING CENTER INC	2	223
RIDGEVIEW GLOBAL STUDIES ACADEMY	1	1550

The following table identifies the school districts in **FLORIDA**, 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
RISING LEADERS ACADEMY, INC.	1	315
RIVER CITY EDUCATION ORGANIZATION, INC.	2	883
RIVERSIDE SCIENCE INC	1	284
SCHOOL BOARD OF MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA	3	439
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LEE COUNTY	92	88934
SEACOAST CHARTER ACADEMY	1	442
SEACOAST CHRISTIAN ACADEMY, INC.	1	350
SLAM FLORIDA INC.	3	2172
ST JOHNS COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	13	6933
STARS EDUCATION SERVICES, INC.	1	600
SUNSHINE ACADEMY OF OAKLAND PARK	1	307
THE PEPIN ACADEMIES, INC.	1	850
THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PALM BEACH COUNTY	104	110783
UNION COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	3	2397
VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	72	68532
WAKULLA COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	5	2472
WASHINGTON COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD	1	72