

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 **631** Schools in **KENTUCKY**

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 **KENTUCKY**.

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

1,135 SCHOOLS

in **KENTUCKY** — which represents **89** percent of schools that participate in the school lunch program — adopted CEP, reaching **584,435** children each school day.

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



631

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



78

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



360,485

KENTUCKY 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 **KENTUCKY**, 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
ALLEN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	5	3002
ANDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	6	3745
BALLARD COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	2	1051
BARDSTOWN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT	5	2782
BARREN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	10	4916
BEREA BOARD OF EDUCATION	1	1088
BOONE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	11	7190
BOURBON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	6	2678
BOWLING GREEN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT	8	4437
BOYD COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	7	3048
BOYLE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	2	725
BRACKEN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	3	1154
BRECKINRIDGE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	1	921
BULLITT COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	13	5370
BURGIN BOARD OF EDUCATION	1	483
BUTLER COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	5	2179
CALDWELL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	4	1930
CALLOWAY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	7	3143
CAMPBELL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	5	2917
CARLISLE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	1	759
CATHOLIC SCHOOL BD. OF COVINGTON	3	260
CLARK COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	9	5239
CORBIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT	7	2883
CRITTENDEN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	2	1428
DAVISS COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	13	5568

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
EDMONSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	5	2024
ELIZABETHTOWN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT	5	2492
EMINENCE BOARD OF EDUCATION	2	878
FAYETTE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	5	5299
FRANKFORT INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	960
FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	12	6312
GLASGOW INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT	5	2409
GRAVES COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	9	3962
GREEN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	4	1671
HARDIN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	22	14793
HARRISON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	7	2892
HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	13	7462
HENRY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	5	2019
HICKMAN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	2	734
HOPKINS COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	14	6382
JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	147	96430
JESSAMINE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	12	8460
JOHN PAUL II ACADEMY	1	118
KENTON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	9	6868
LARUE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	5	2371
LOGAN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	6	3431
LUDLOW INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT	1	825
LYON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	1	972
MADISON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	19	11305
MARION COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	7	3225

The following table identifies the school districts in **KENTUCKY**, 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
MARSHALL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	9	4482
MCCRACKEN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	10	6843
MCLEAN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	5	1435
MEADE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	8	4970
MERCER COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	5	2723
MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	6	4455
MUHLENBERG COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	8	5005
MURRAY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT	7	1871
NELSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	9	3266
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND EARLY LEARNING	2	145
OLDHAM COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	2	699
OWEN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	4	1732
PAINTSVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	777
PENDLETON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	4	2276

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
PIKEVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT	1	620
RACELAND INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	1022
SCOTT COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	16	10165
SHELBY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	12	7069
SIMPSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	6	3014
TAYLOR COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	3	2764
TODD COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	5	1942
TRIGG COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	4	1966
TRIMBLE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	3	1146
UNION COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	5	2029
WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	24	17957
WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	3	1788
WILLIAMSTOWN BOARD OF EDUCATION	1	945
WOODFORD COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	7	4189