

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 **227** Schools in **NEW JERSEY**

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 **NEW JERSEY**.

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

365 SCHOOLS

in **NEW JERSEY** — which represents **14** percent of schools that participate in the school lunch program — adopted CEP, reaching **156,709** children each school day.

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



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



66 school districts in **NEW JERSEY**, listed on the reverse page, would be affected.



93,251 **NEW JERSEY** 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 **NEW JERSEY**, 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
ARCHWAY PROGRAMS	2	213
BAIS REUVEN KAMENITZ	1	498
BAIS RIVKA ROCHEL	2	1585
BNOS TZIPPA INC.	1	165
BURCH CHARTER SCH OF EX	1	323
COLLEGE ACHIEVE GREATER ASBURY PARK CS	3	528
COLLEGE ACHIEVE PATERSON CS	3	1307
COMMERCIAL TWP BD OF ED	1	454
COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL OF PATERSON	2	885
CONG SANZ OF LAKEWOOD INC	1	381
CONGREGATION MACHZIKEI HADAS	1	465
CONGREGATION YETEV LEV	1	216
CPC BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE	1	95
EAST ORANGE BD OF ED	22	8765
ESSEX VALLEY SCHOOL	1	90
FAIRFIELD TWP BD OF ED	1	525
FEDCAP REHABILITATION SERVICES	1	43
GARFIELD BD OF ED	3	713
GARFIELD PARK ACADEMY	1	165
GLOUCESTER CITY BD OF ED	5	2369
GREAT OAKS LEGACY CHARTER SCHOOL	1	759
HALEDON BD OF ED	1	1023
HAMILTON TWP BD OF ED	2	285
JERSEY CITY BD OF ED	29	14046
JERSEY CITY COMM CHARTER	2	569

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
JOHN P. HOLLAND CHARTER SCHOOL	1	682
KEANSBURG BD OF ED	4	1568
LAKEWOOD BD OF ED	9	4548
LAWNSIDE BD OF ED	1	334
LEAP ACADEMY UNIVERSITY	4	1561
LEARNING INSTITUTE OF UNION CITY INC.	2	206
MARIA L. VARISCO/ROGERS	1	567
MARION P THOMAS CHARTER	3	1374
MESIFTA MEOR HTORAH A NJ NONPROFIT CORPORATION	1	71
MESORAS HATORAH INC	1	152
NEW BRUNSWICK BD OF ED	16	8862
NEW HORIZONS COMM CHARTER	1	379
NEWARK EDUCATORS CHARTER SCHOOL	1	178
OHR AVRAHAM CHAIM INC	1	117
ORANGE BD OF ED	13	5383
PASSAIC ARTS AND SCIENCE CHARTER SCHOOL	7	1927
PATERSON ARTS & SCIENCES CHARTER SCHOOL	4	1178
PATERSON CHARTER SCI TECH	4	1609
PAULSBORO BD OF ED	3	1258
PEOPLES ACHIEVE COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL	2	793
PROSPECT PARK BD OF ED	2	797
RABBINICAL COLLEGE	1	268
SALEM CO SPEC SERV	2	123
SHIRAS CHAIM	1	620
SOMERSET CO ED SERV COMM	1	132

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(continued)

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
SUNN ED. RESOURCES DBA CREATIVE ACHIEVEMENT ACADEMY	1	43
TALMUD TORAH OF LAKEWOOD	1	384
TEAM ACADEMY CHARTER	12	5958
TOMS RIVER BD OF ED	1	303
TORAS IMECHA	2	774
TRENTON BD OF ED	25	12896
WOODLYNNE BD OF ED	1	397
YESHIVA CHAYEI OLAM	1	80
YESHIVA MKOR CHAIM	1	91
YESHIVA SHAAR HATALMUD	1	158
YESHIVA TORAS MENACHEM	1	672
YESHIVA TORAS YISROEL	1	125
YESHIVA YESODEI HATORAH	1	41
YESHIVAS LEKACH TOV INC	1	21
YESHIVAS OHR OLAM	1	141
YESHIVAS OHR YISSOCHOR ACAD	1	13