

# 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 **311** Schools in **OKLAHOMA**

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 **OKLAHOMA**.

### 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

**389** SCHOOLS

in **OKLAHOMA** — which represents **22** percent of schools that participate in the school lunch program — adopted CEP, reaching **131,917** children each school day.

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



**311**

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



**105**

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



**102,194**

**OKLAHOMA children** attend schools that would no longer be able to offer meals at no charge to all students through CEP.<sup>1</sup>

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 **OKLAHOMA**, 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
ALBION	1	39
ALEX	1	211
ALTUS	5	2266
ANADARKO	5	1362
ARDMORE	6	2617
ATOKA	2	863
BELFONTE	1	67
BILLINGS	2	77
BLAIR	2	177
BOKOSHE	1	47
BOSWELL	3	278
BOWLEGS	2	258
BUTNER	2	195
CALVIN	2	169
CAMERON	2	299
CANEY	2	239
CAVE SPRINGS	1	110
CHARTER: HUPFELD/W VILLAGE	1	292
CHELSEA	3	808
CHICKASHA	4	1534
CHOUTEAU-MAZIE	4	746
CLAYTON	2	239
DAHLONEGAH	1	186
DUNCAN	3	683
FANSHAWE	1	94
FORT TOWSON	3	326
GANS	2	338
GLOVER	1	63
GRAND VIEW	1	522

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
HAILEYVILLE	2	298
HARTSHORNE	3	709
HASKELL	3	740
HAWORTH	3	456
HEAVENER	2	855
HOBART	3	704
HODGEN	1	265
HOLDENVILLE	3	958
HUGO	4	1166
IDABEL	4	1256
KEOTA	2	382
KINGSTON	3	1250
KINTA	1	47
KONAWA	3	520
LIBERTY	1	328
LONE WOLF	2	96
LOWREY	1	95
MACOMB	2	273
MANGUM	3	464
MARBLE CITY	1	78
MARYETTA	1	627
MAUD	2	276
MCALESTER	3	2000
MCCURTAIN	2	237
MIDWAY	2	218
MIDWEST CITY-DEL CITY	6	3563
MILLWOOD	3	1095
MONROE	1	88
MOUNDS	1	363

The following table identifies the school districts in **OKLAHOMA**, 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
MULDROW	3	1287
MUSKOGEE	9	4485
NASHOBA	1	54
OKLAHOMA CITY	41	25768
OKMULGEE	1	331
OLUSTEE-ELDORADO	2	164
OSAGE	1	92
PANAMA	3	755
PANOLA	1	57
PAOLI	2	180
PAWHUSKA	3	499
PLEASANT GROVE	1	208
PORUM	2	414
PRUE	2	275
PUTNAM CITY	5	2100
QUINTON	2	384
ROCKY MOUNTAIN	1	203
ROLAND	3	937
RYAN	2	252
SALINA	3	775
SALLISAW	3	1298
SASAKWA	1	58
SCHULTER	1	154
SEMINOLE	4	1148

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
SHAWNEE	4	2356
STIGLER	1	470
STILWELL	3	1381
TANNEHILL	1	138
TEMPLE	2	167
TIPTON	2	236
TULSA	33	13858
TUPELO	2	241
TWIN HILLS	1	322
VARNUM	2	309
VIAN	2	396
WAGONER	3	1376
WAINWRIGHT	1	76
WEBBERS FALLS	2	278
WELEETKA	3	381
WESTERN HEIGHTS	3	1080
WETUMKA	2	384
WEWOKA	3	619
WHITESBORO	2	217
WILSON	2	299
WISTER	2	459
WRIGHT CITY	3	495
ZION	1	266