

# 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 **784** Schools in **VIRGINIA**

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 **VIRGINIA**.

### 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

**1,189** SCHOOLS

in **VIRGINIA** — which represents **63** percent of schools that participate in the school lunch program — adopted CEP, reaching **638,489** children each school day.

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



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



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



**451,117** **VIRGINIA** 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 **VIRGINIA**, 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
ALBEMARLE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	7	3329
ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	9	6721
ALLEGHANY HIGHLANDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS	6	2850
AMELIA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	1649
AMHERST COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	10	3977
APPOMATTOX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	2286
ARLINGTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	7	4204
AUGUSTA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	15	8247
BATH COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1	187
BEDFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	11	4807
BLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	792
BOTETOURT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1	127
BUENA VISTA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	904
CAMPBELL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	14	7765
CAROLINE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	4439
CARROLL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	10	3477
CHARLOTTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	1652
CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	7	3739
CHESAPEAKE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	24	16168
CHESTERFIELD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	40	36234
COLONIAL BEACH PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	640
COLONIAL HEIGHTS CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	2876
CRAIG COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	486
CULPEPER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	3679
DICKENSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	1928

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
DINWIDDIE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	7	4267
FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	41	30302
FAUQUIER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	309
FLOYD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	1766
FLUVANNA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	1183
FRANKLIN COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	14	6301
FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	8	3920
FREDERICKSBURG CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	3565
GALAX CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1	335
GILES COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	2258
GLOUCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	2378
GRAYSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	6	1585
GREENE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	2883
HAMPTON CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	32	19294
HANOVER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	1302
HARRISONBURG CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	9	6702
HENRICO COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	43	27130
ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	1790
LOUDOUN COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	11	6602
LOUISA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	6	5107
MADISON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	1606
MANASSAS CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	9	7714
MANASSAS PARK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	3454
MATHEWS COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	916
MECKLENBURG COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	6	3977

The following table identifies the school districts in **VIRGINIA**, 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
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	6	1983
NELSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	1464
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	1208
ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	10	5008
PAGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	7	2788
PATRICK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	1819
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	18	7876
PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	37	28888
PULASKI COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	7	3968
RADFORD CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	1635
RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1	454
RICHMOND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	1380
ROANOKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	8	3762
ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	6	2499
ROCKINGHAM COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	12	4504
RUSSELL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	11	3367
SALEM CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	834

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
SCOTT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	13	3414
SHENANDOAH COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	9	5687
SOUTHAMPTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	6	2557
SPOTSYLVANIA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	19	14360
STAFFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	9	6000
STAUNTON CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	6	2728
SUFFOLK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	20	14406
SURRY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	688
TAZEWELL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	13	5330
VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	31	19082
WARREN COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	9	5170
WASHINGTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	15	6661
WAYNESBORO CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	7	3063
WILLIAMSBURG-JAMES CITY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	8	5109
WINCHESTER CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	7	4193
WISE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	11	5612
WYTHE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	12	3811