

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 **309** Schools in **WISCONSIN**

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 **WISCONSIN**.

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

647 SCHOOLS

in **WISCONSIN** — which represents **28** percent of schools that participate in the school lunch program — adopted CEP, reaching **226,678** children each school day.

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



309

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



69

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



107,541

WISCONSIN 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 **WISCONSIN**, 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
ABBOTSFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	773
ADAMS-FRIENDSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	1309
ADELINE MONTESSORI SCHOOL INC.	1	97
ALMA CENTER SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	573
ANTIGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT	5	1880
APPLETON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT	15	5613
BEECHER-DUNBAR-PEMBINE SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	231
BLACK RIVER FALLS SCHOOLS	4	1574
BOWLER SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	310
BRUCE SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	435
CLAYTON SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	301
CRANDON SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	852
CUDAHY SCHOOL DISTRICT	6	2087
DRUMMOND AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	322
EASTBROOK ACADEMY, INC.	1	387
EAU CLAIRE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT	1	268
EVERGREEN ELEMENTARY	1	403
FLAMBEAU SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	484
GRANTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	234
GREENWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	343
HORICON SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	512
JANESVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT	12	4426
JOURNEYS LUTHERAN SCHOOL	1	82
KENOSHA COMMON SCHOOL DISTRICT	38	18944
LAFARGE SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	222

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
LAONA SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	277
LIGHTHOUSE CHURCH, INC.	1	290
LINCOLN ACADEMY (THE)	1	405
MADISON METRO SCHOOL DISTRICT	16	5439
MARION SCHOOL DISTRICT	1	252
MELLEN SCHOOL DISTRICT	1	274
MENASHA SCHOOL DISTRICT	7	3080
MERCER SCHOOL DISTRICT	1	112
MONTELLO SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	572
NATIVITY JESUIT ACADEMY	1	254
NECEDAH AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	318
NEENAH JOINT SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	858
NEW AUBURN SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	302
NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIAN ACADEMY	1	154
NIAGARA SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	444
NORTHWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	345
ONE CITY SCHOOLS INC.	2	472
OSHKOSH AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT	17	7171
OUR LADY OF SORROWS CHURCH	1	75
PATHWAYS HIGH INC.	1	139
PHELPS SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	149
PRINCETON SCHOOL DISTRICT	1	327
RACINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT	24	15741
RHINELANDER SCHOOL DISTRICT	5	1527
SALEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SCHOOL	1	168

The following table identifies the school districts in **WISCONSIN**, 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
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LADYSMITH	3	753
SHEBOYGAN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT	25	9582
SIENACATHOLICSCHOOLS OF RACINE	4	1108
SIREN SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	404
ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON CATHOLIC SCHOOL	1	78
ST. PAUL LUTHERAN SCHOOL	1	77
SUN PRAIRIE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	488
TOMAH AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	318
TWIN LAKES #4 SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	295
TWO RIVERS SCHOOL DISTRICT	4	1594
UNITED COMMUNITY CENTER INC.	2	1530
WABENO SCHOOL DISTRICT	2	395
WAUSAU SCHOOL DISTRICT	8	1649
WAUSAUKEE SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	419
WEST ALLIS SCHOOL DISTRICT	15	6340
WESTON SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	246
WHITE LAKE SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	162
WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SCHOOL	3	169
WISCONSIN RAPIDS SCHOOL DISTRICT	1	127