

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 **468** Schools in **WEST 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 **WEST 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

606 SCHOOLS

in **WEST VIRGINIA** — which represents **93** percent of schools that participate in the school lunch program — adopted CEP, reaching **226,092** children each school day.

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



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



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



182,745 **WEST VIRGINIA** 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 **WEST 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
BARBOUR CO BD OF EDUCATION	4	1126
BERKELEY CO BD OF EDUCATION	16	8274
BROOKE CO BD OF EDUCATION	6	2455
CABELL CO BD OF EDUCATION	26	11614
DODDRIDGE CO BD OF EDUCATION	4	1092
FAYETTE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	11	5605
GILMER CO BD OF EDUCATION	2	773
GRANT CO BD OF EDUCATION	4	1626
GREENBRIER CO BD OF EDUCATION	13	4631
HAMPSHIRE CO BD OF EDUCATION	8	2773
HANCOCK CO BD OF EDUCATION	7	3501
HARDY CO BD OF EDUCATION	6	2241
HARRISON CO BD OF EDUCATION	23	9948
JACKSON CO BD OF EDUCATION	12	4077
JEFFERSON CO BD OF EDUCATION	16	8406
KANAWHA CO BD OF EDUCATION	64	23628
MARION CO BD OF EDUCATION	19	7396
MARSHALL CO BD OF EDUCATION	13	4261
MASON CO BD OF EDUCATION	10	3757
MINERAL CO BD OF EDUCATION	12	4016
MONONGALIA CO BD OF EDUCATION	17	11324

School District	Schools Impacted	Children Impacted
MONROE CO BD OF EDUCATION	4	1630
MORGAN CO BD OF EDUCATION	6	2183
NICHOLAS CO BD OF EDUCATION	13	3452
OHIO CO BD OF EDUCATION	13	5020
PENDLETON CO BD OF EDUCATION	4	875
PLEASANTS CO BD OF EDUCATION	4	1074
POCAHONTAS COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	5	941
PRESTON CO BD OF EDUCATION	10	4042
PUTNAM CO BD OF EDUCATION	14	3831
RANDOLPH CO BD OF EDUCATION	13	3649
RITCHIE CO BD OF EDUCATION	5	1225
ROANE CO BD OF EDUCATION	5	1779
TAYLOR CO BD OF EDUCATION	5	2211
TUCKER CO BD OF EDUCATION	3	955
TYLER CO BD OF EDUCATION	4	1223
UPSHUR COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION	9	3795
WAYNE CO BD OF EDUCATION	18	6247
WIRT CO BD OF EDUCATION	3	937
WOOD CO BD OF EDUCATION	24	11604
WYOMING CO BD OF EDUCATION	13	3548