

Majority Leader Steve Scalise
House Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Majority Leader John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Minority Leader Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Lindsey Graham
Senate Committee on the Budget
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Jeff Merkley
Senate Committee on the Budget
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Jodey Arrington
House Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Brendan Boyle
House Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman John Boozman
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Amy Klobuchar
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Tim Walberg
House Committee on Education and the
Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Robert Scott
House Committee on Education and the
Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

**Dear Majority Leader Scalise, Minority Leader Jeffries, Majority Leader Thune,
Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Merkley,
Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member Boyle, Chairman Boozman, Ranking
Member Klobuchar, Chairman Walberg, Ranking Member Scott:**

The National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program are critical nutrition supports that positively impact children's health, learning, and development in every state across the country. They ensure that children have access to the meals they need to learn and thrive, reduce pressure on family household food budgets, and

support academic success.

We are writing to express our strong opposition to the billions of dollars in proposed cuts to school breakfast and lunch currently circulating in Congress.

These proposals would result in large numbers of children losing access to the nutritious school meals they need, place an additional financial burden on families already struggling with expensive grocery bills and increase the administrative burden on schools to operate the programs.

The proposed cuts to the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) would dramatically reduce the number of high need schools able to offer free meals to all their students by raising the eligibility threshold for schools to participate from the current 25 percent Identified Student Percentage (ISP) to 60 percent ISP. It would also decrease school meal operation efficiency and effectiveness. The proposal would make more than 24,000 schools, serving more than 12 million children, no longer eligible to participate in CEP.

Taking away this important and effective way for thousands of local schools to offer breakfast and lunch at no charge to students would increase child hunger in the classroom, increase unpaid school meal debt, and bring stigma back into the cafeteria. CEP has been proven to dramatically reduce administrative work for school nutrition departments by eliminating the need for them to process paperwork and focus on what matters most – feeding students. When CEP schools have less paperwork to process, they can spend more time creating healthy, scratch cooked meals for students.

Another proposal would require all families applying for school meals to provide detailed household income documentation before being approved for free or reduced-price meals. This change would reduce access for eligible children and increase the administrative burden for schools. Requiring full income documentation has been shown to cause eligible children to fall through the cracks, resulting in many missing out on the nutritious meals they need. Additionally, this mandate would dramatically increase the paperwork schools must process, resulting in limited resources being diverted away from feeding, caring for, and educating students.

Currently, most schools are required to verify the income of 3 percent of applicants -- a process that is already burdensome and leads to eligible children missing out on school meals. Increasing this requirement to 100 percent would significantly worsen these issues, creating unnecessary barriers for both families and schools.

We strongly oppose these and other proposals that will reduce children's access to school meals. Congress should be focused on strengthening and expanding these vital programs, not weakening them through these proposals or any other cuts.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Advocates for Better Children's Diets
Afterschool Alliance
Alliance to End Hunger
American Commodity Distribution Association
American Federation of Teachers
American Friends Service Committee
American Heart Association
American Public Health Association
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Balanced
CACFP Roundtable
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Ecoliteracy
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Chef Ann Foundation
Coalition on Human Needs
Common Threads
Community Engagement and Consultation Group Inc.
Council of Administrators of Special Education
First Focus Campaign for Children
FoodCorps
Food Research & Action Center
Friends of the Earth
Generations United
Healthy Schools Campaign
International Dairy Foods Association
Jewish Federation of North America
Kids in Nutrition
LunchAssist
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
MomsRising
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National CACFP Forum
National Education Association
National Farm to School Network
National Organization for Women
National PTA
The National Rural Education Association

National Women's Law Center
ParentsTogether Action
Partnership for a Healthier America
Pilot Light
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
School Nutrition Association
ScratchWorks
Service Employees International Union
Share Our Strength
Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior
Society of Behavioral Medicine
Solving Hunger, Tusk Philanthropies
UnidosUS
Wellness in the Schools