

Invest in School Meals for All



1 million students

could have access to

free breakfast & lunch.



Opportunity

School meals are a vital source of nutritious food for our millions of students whose families struggle to make ends meet. In times of crisis, school meals continue to be an essential resource. Across our state, more than 2 million children live in food-insecure households. Without effective action, these numbers will grow in the face of COVID-19 and its aftermath.

Legislative Action

Make targeted State investments to enable the implementation of universally free breakfast & lunch in schools where there is a substantial need among students but federal rules make the provision of universal meals unattainable or unsustainable.

Why This Matters

Meeting basic needs. The economic consequences of emergencies make it harder for low-income families to meet their basic needs.

Expanding the reach of school meals will give more children access to free, nutritious meals in the wake of COVID-19 as families grapple with unemployment, lost wages, and other hardships.

Equitable access to vital resources. The federal response to COVID-19 means more people have access to critical supports, including food, but many Californians are being left out. Among those are certain immigrant families – and their citizen children – who will not receive relief payments despite the grave need. Increasing access to school meals means providing more children with much-needed food regardless of immigration status.

Fiscal relief and stability for schools. Targeted investments in universally free meals would make more state funding immediately available to school nutrition programs once campuses re-open, and allow those program to draw down substantial federal funding.

Educational equity. School meals are an educational tool. The opportunity gap affecting low-income students and students of color, particularly Black and Latino children, stands to widen with COVID-19 school closures. Addressing inequities in opportunity and achievement requires resources to meet students' most basic needs, including nutrition.

Lunch shaming & school meal debt. State and federal policies help protect students from lunch shaming. Now we must make sure that schools can sustain practices that eliminate shaming, prevent school meal debt, and best serve students who are experiencing need. Providing school nutrition programs with stable, predictable, and sustainable revenue streams will be especially important during the recovery from COVID-19.