

**FEED KIDS.
SOLVE HUNGER.**

SCHOOL MEALS FOR ALL.



ENDING STUDENT HUNGER IS ON THE TABLE

Make School Meals for All Permanent in Massachusetts

Massachusetts will continue to provide access to school meals for all students at no cost during the 2022-2023 school year, a critical resource made possible by a one-year, state-funded extension of the successful federal program.

Now we need to make this policy permanent.

When kids are hungry at school, they cannot learn. Hungry kids cannot concentrate, have lower academic achievement, experience cognitive and developmental impairments, exhibit more behavioral challenges, have more absences, visit the nurse more often, and are at higher risk of obesity.

Food insecurity is a crisis with health, educational, and economic consequences, leaving children particularly vulnerable to the long-term impact. Rates of food insecurity among children in Massachusetts were already too high in our state prior to the COVID-19 pandemic at 1 in 10. Now roughly 1 in 5 households with children report difficulty affording enough to eat, with Black, Latino, and multiracial families disproportionately impacted.

Permanent School Meals for All is a necessary step toward ending hunger in our state and ensuring all our children can thrive.

In 2019, **1 in 4** food insecure children were not eligible for free or reduced-price school meals

School Meals for All increases access to free school meals for up to 400,000 students

FAQS

How can we address this problem for kids?

We can ensure that, while at school, every child is fed and ready to learn by passing legislation making school meals permanently free for all students.

Before the pandemic, 40% of students ate school lunch daily. In March 2022, under universal school meals, over 60% ate lunch. Because cost and stigma are two of the major barriers to students accessing the meals they need at school, state legislation requiring universal free school meals in Massachusetts would allow every student to access the nutrition they need during the school day. Legislation would allow schools to plan ahead and give students the security of knowing they can get breakfast and lunch every school day.

What does school meals for all mean?

School meals for all, or universal school meals, allows every student in Massachusetts who wants or needs a school breakfast or lunch to receive it – at no cost to their family and with no requirement to sign up or provide income or other information. Just as no student is required to pay fees at public schools when they enter the classroom, there should be no financial barrier in the school cafeteria.

Why now?

As schools eased back to normal operation, federal flexibilities enabled them to serve meals to all students at no cost. When these waivers expired, the Massachusetts Legislature stepped in and funded this policy for the 2022-2023 school year.

We know, from this experience, and from schools operating universal school meals under the Community Eligibility Provision before 2020, that this policy works. School Meals for All improves more than participation, it improves academic, health, and socioemotional outcomes.

We cannot and should not go back to a policy that excluded 1 in 4 food insecure children from having robust access to school meals. The state has shown its commitment to this solution. Now is the time to make it permanent.

How would school meals for all work?

All eligible schools would be required to enroll in available federal programs that provide funding for school meals. The Commonwealth would continue to provide funding to cover the remaining cost so that schools can offer meals to all without requiring families to contribute a copay.

**On average, 56,665
more students
participated daily in
school lunch in October
2022 compared to
October 2019.**

How can I get involved?

To pass School Meals for All, we need to build a grassroots movement, raise awareness, and grow political will. We can't do that without you. Your voice and unique perspective have immense power to influence state level legislation. Join our coalition. Write and call your legislators and tell them to prioritize School Meals for All. Tell your friends to join. Get the word out by posting on social media and emailing your network. When we all take action together, we can make Massachusetts a better place for our kids.

Who is the Feed Kids Coalition?

The Feed Kids Coalition is comprised of more than 115 diverse partners including health, education, business, social services, and faith-based organizations focused on expanding access to school meals by advocating for a School Meals for All policy in Massachusetts.