

Speaker Mike Johnson  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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

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

Minority Leader Chuck Schumer  
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  
Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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

**Dear Speaker Johnson, 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