Subject: Protect School Meals from Proposed Cuts

Dear Colleague,

We write to express our shared concern about proposed changes to federal school meal programs that would dramatically increase administrative costs and paperwork burdens, while threatening access to nutritious school meals for students across America.

School meal programs represent a critical investment in our nation's future, ensuring students receive the nutrition they need to succeed academically. Several [proposals](https://schoolnutrition.org/resource/protect-school-meals-from-proposed-cuts/) currently under consideration as part of the budget process would overwhelm these programs with administrative costs and paperwork.

* **Restricting the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP):** The proposal to raise the CEP eligibility threshold from 25% to 60% would cut more than 24,000 schools, serving 12 million students, from the program. CEP eliminates paperwork and stigma, while curbing unpaid meal debt. This change would force schools to revert to outdated, inefficient meal application processes, placing additional strain on already overburdened school nutrition staff.
* **Mandating 100% income verification:** Schools simply do not have the staff, software or systems to collect and process additional paperwork required to verify income for every single application. This mandate would delay access for eligible families, causing students to go hungry and unpaid meal debt to rise. School nutrition staff would be buried in paperwork, diverting resources from preparing and serving healthy meals that nourish children.
* **Eliminating Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility:** This change would cause approximately 1 million students to lose automatic eligibility for free meals. BBCE efficiently guarantees at-risk children receive the nutrition they need to succeed in school without unnecessary red tape.

These proposals would divert limited resources away from the core mission of providing nutritious meals, toward administrative functions, reducing efficiency of the programs and burdening working families and local communities. Further, research shows school meals are the healthiest meals students eat, and these proposals threaten access for millions of families.

We urge you to stand with students, families, and schools in rejecting these costly and inefficient proposals. For more information or to sign on to this letter, please contact X