

Senate Finance  
 05/09/2022 Upon Adjournment  
 HB22-1414 Healthy Meals For All Public School Students  
 Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Zarah Levy For Colorado Latino Leadership Advocacy and Research Organization	<p>My name is Zarah Levy, and I am the Policy Advocacy Manager for CLLARO. The Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy, and Research Organization is a statewide nonprofit . We were founded as LARASA in 1964 and for the past 57 years, we have been dedicated to helping Latinos in Colorado achieve their fullest potential. We believe that our mission will be furthered by the passage of House Bill 1414 giving children in Colorado a chance for continued access to healthy school meals. We know both from data and from our direct service work that Latino families in the state have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. In 2020, data showed that Latino families suffered food insecurity at nearly twice the state average. One in four children in Colorado lives in a mixed status household and many families also experienced a chilling effect due to federal changes to Public Charge. Many families declined benefits that they or their children were fully eligible for out of fear, including immigrant families who are actually eligible for SNAP and TANF. 26% of adults in Latinx and non-white households reported having to cut back or skip meals because there wasn't enough money to buy food during Covid . The parents in our PALS program were heavily reliant on school lunches to make ends meet, although several were reluctant to fill out the yearly forms. The federal funding that has provided school meals for all children regardless of eligibility the last two years has been an incredible chance to close the hunger gaps in Colorado. CLLARO supported SB-087, and we are honored to do the same for HB-1414. As the parent of two school aged children and the former recipient of free school meals, I am aware of the dynamic that creates shame for children who receive them. The removal of stigma and teasing about access is a key reason that HB1414 is so important. The majority of Coloradans polled will support this issue, and taking it to the ballot is the most likely option to ensure that the positive outcomes can be permanent and well funded. Please vote yes on this crucial legislation so that Colorado can vote yes in November, and our kiddos can learn without hunger or shame.</p> <p>Zarah Levy                      Policy &amp; Advocacy Manager                      CLLARO                      zarah.levy@cclaro.org                      1. <a href="https://www.coloradokids.org/data/publications/2021-kids-count/pg.17">https://www.coloradokids.org/data/publications/2021-kids-count/pg.17</a>                      2. <a href="https://hungerfreecolorado.org/partner-with-us/initiatives/covid-food-insecurity-survey/">https://hungerfreecolorado.org/partner-with-us/initiatives/covid-food-insecurity-survey/</a></p>

<p>Matthew Poling For Durango 9-R School District</p>	<p>My name is Matt Poling, I am the director of food and nutrition for the Durango 9-R School District in Durango, CO, and I have also had the pleasure of working as the executive chef for District 6 in Greeley, CO for the last 8 years. In that time I've seen firsthand the benefits a healthy school meal provides for a child, as well as the detriment that hunger can have on their ability to learn. If there was a single positive outcome over the past two years of living through a global pandemic, it would be that we provided ALL children the right and opportunity to be provided a healthy meal at school. Regardless of socio-economic status, race, religion, or any of the other myriad ways we tend to separate ourselves from one another as human beings, the one collective need that brings us together is food. Sharing a meal with one another has important cultural significance in our society, and equity in how meals are served in schools is just as impactful on a student as the facts that they're learning in the classroom. The Healthy School Meals For All bill will help to eliminate the stigma associated with a free meal, as well as ensure that we are reaching every child that may be food insecure, regardless of whether or not they've been identified as qualifying for free or reduced meals. I'm here today to implore our representatives in Congress to step up and show that we are committed to the health and wellness of our nation's children, and that we'll provide them with the resources necessary to thrive in the classroom and beyond.</p> <p>Thank you for your time</p>
<p>Dean Vidal For Self</p>	<p>Plesse vote in favor of bill 1414. Help eliminate the unintend shaming that's inherent in means tested school meals.</p> <p>It may not have been this way when you and I went to school, but the current meals approach creates an unhealrhy and abusive workplace environment in our school lunch rooms. Bill 1414 can fix that. Once aware of this adverse workplace environment, I hope you feel compelled to act to correct it, as I do.</p> <p>It's worth asking the people of Colorado to support this initiative. Let's get better return on our overall education investment. Please support bill 1414.</p> <p>Thank you</p>
<p>Logan Hood For Self</p>	<p>I am in full support of support of HB-1414. Access for all will not only provide equitable access every colorado student, but by having high quality food where students get majority of their nutrition will provide excellent outcomes in the classroom!</p>
<p>Cady Frazier For Brigaid</p>	<p>Hi. My name is Cady Frazier and I am a chef with Brigaid, working in public school kitchens and I hold a degree in food policy. Thank you for your time today. I'm here to strongly urge the committee to support HB22-1414 Healthy School Meals for All. I have worked in school food for</p>

	<p>the past seven years in Portland, Maine; New York City and now currently here in Denver. In my entire time in school food I have had the good fortune of never having to charge a child for the right to eat lunch during the school day. In Maine I was director of food services of a nonprofit preschool and the school covered the costs of school meals for all students. In New York City I was regional head chef for a network of charter schools and the city had passed a Free School Lunch for All Program in 2017, so again I was able to feed every student that needed a meal regardless of financial means. Here in Colorado I have continued to be able to provide school meals to every student due to the federal waiver from covid 19 which will expire June 30th of this year.</p> <p>As a chef in kitchens with universal meals I have been able to focus my energy on providing the best scratch cooked lunch possible to my students without having to be concerned with administrative and labor burdens of children having to go through a cashier line, collecting fees and separating free, reduced and paid students.</p> <p>As we make our way through the second half of this school year and I look ahead to the not so distant future of the next school year I have a fear that for the first time in my professional career I will have to charge students for lunch. For the first time I will have to see students separated by their economic status in the cafeteria and the detrimental stigma that comes with that.</p> <p>There are many reasons a child may not have money for lunch on a given day but at the end of the day none of those reasons matter when the result is that a child does not eat and goes hungry while at school. School meals are a foundational piece of education, as no child can learn on an empty stomach. By providing free meals for all students we can help ensure that every single student in Colorado is starting off on equal footing in the classroom and in life.</p> <p>Thank you so much for your time and again please consider supporting healthy school meals for all so that all colorado children have access to the best educational outcomes possible.</p>
<p>Lara Center For Jeffco Education Support Professionals Association</p>	<p>Hello Senate Finance Committee-</p> <p>JESPA believes that students in our public education system don't just deserve but indeed require access to free and nutritious food during their school day in order to access their education. The pandemic's universal free meals program has revealed that we are missing many students who need breakfast and lunch at school, but are, for whatever reason, not part of the Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) program.</p> <p>Many public-school districts across Colorado have seen a dramatic rise in the number of students participating in the free meals (breakfast and lunch) provided at their school over the past 2 COVID impacted years.</p>

	<p>The CEA believes all Colorado students, regardless of socio-economic status, should have access to fresh and nutritious meals while at school, so they can learn and thrive.</p> <p>HB22-1414 is a great way to ensure our students get what they need to thrive without trying to pass an across the board tax increase to pay for this. Many of our wealthy citizens want to do their part and this bill would allow us to take it to the voters in November!</p> <p>What a great, feel good message to feed healthy food to all Colorado students, no stigma for being on FRL program, just eat well and thrive!!</p> <p>Thank you- Lara Center, JESPA President</p>
<p>Rachel Phillips For Self</p>	<p>Good afternoon, my name is Rachel Phillips. I am writing as a former educator and anti hunger activist to testify in support of HB-1414: Healthy School Meals for All.</p> <p>I worked in two “wealthy” districts in the state of Colorado during my time as an educator and I can tell you that hunger was very much alive and well in both.</p> <p>Only it was well hidden under the ugly camouflage of shame.</p> <p>This prevented students, among other things, from eating a snack when I allowed them to eat in the classes proceeding lunch or at the end of the day before sports practices because it would mean they would need to go get their free and reduced meal and bring it back to class. And then everyone would know. So they didn’t go.</p> <p>Worse they would eat nothing in class and nothing in the cafeteria–suffering in silence because their parents either were not eligible for free and reduced lunch, did not want to fill out the application or were afraid to fill out the application.</p> <p>Teachers across the US will be familiar with Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. The foundation of which is physiological needs:</p> <p>Air.. water.. shelter...sleep... food.</p> <p>Educators know that we can’t address the learning of the student if that foundational need isn’t met.</p> <p>And I can tell you that that need, in my schools, was not being met.</p> <p>So what did I do? I paid for breakfast and snacks out of my own pocket so that ANY student could fully participate (emotionally and mentally) in</p>

	<p>my class. I can assure you I was not being reimbursed and we all know the state of teacher salaries.</p> <p>Education funding in Colorado is a disgrace, as has already been mentioned. But we can't begin to talk about textbooks, or classroom improvements, or teacher salaries until we address the basic, fundamental needs of our students. If that is not taken care of, nothing else will matter.</p> <p>As such I urge you, members of the committee, to vote yes on HB-1414 and thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.</p>
<p>Tomas German-Palacios For Self</p>	<p>Dear Senate Finance Committee Members,</p> <p>I am a concerned Colorado Citizen, a family member of School aged kids, a Functional Medicine Health Coach and I volunteer and work with several organizations which focus on improving Food and Nutrition security. I have seen first hand the need and the numerous positive societal, local community, familial and personal benefits having school meals provided in our schools since the federal waiver was brought in during the COVID Pandemic. The fact is our children need to have healthy meals provided to them (breakfast and lunch) in order to assure all students are obtaining proper nutrition on a daily basis. With proper nutrition provided many kids flourish where they were struggling prior. Children need this nutrition to learn and become our leaders of tomorrow! Many families are struggling now more than ever because of the inflation of food prices. This is your opportunity to make sure you have done what is needed to provide the most basic resource to our children, to assure that our future generations are able to learn, grow and succeed in better overall health to be our leaders of tomorrow and achieve more than has ever been thought possible!</p> <p>Thank you, Tomas German-Palacios</p>

Good afternoon,

My name is Edith Mata. I am an Organizer with 9to5 Colorado. At 9to5 we focus on economic justice organizing that works towards gender and racial justice with members throughout the state. We urge you to support SB22-87 Healthy School Meals for All.

Many 9to5 members are paid low wages and are part of the BIPOC community - who are most affected by this issue. Food security can be fragile and many families are navigating this along with skyrocketing rent, low wages, barriers to assistance programs and many other economic injustices. This bill is a great investment for public education and helps low-income families create debt free households so parents can focus on other necessities.

As a single mother of an 8 yr old daughter who attends Colorado public schools myself, it is difficult for me to afford expenses, like food. Like many women in Colorado, I am the main breadwinner for my child and the one answering the question - what is my kid going to eat today? Food costs have increased and it is very expensive whether I pack her lunch or pay for daily school meals. Unfortunately, I make too much money to qualify for free lunch and yet not enough to afford daily school meals. As a mom, I want her to focus on learning and gain confidence socially during lunch without being hungry so she can excel in school. Passing Healthy School Meals for All will remove barriers to accessing school meals for so many Colorado families.

Thank you, members of the committee for listening. I urge you to vote yes on SB22-87. More than ever, we need to provide healthy meals to all students in our state so our families can succeed now and in the future.