

HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS FOR ALL

Please Support House Bill 1414

Referred Ballot Measure Healthy School Meals for All Colorado Children

School meal programs lead to improved health, better grades, higher attendance, and increased graduation rates. Currently, all schools are able to provide school meals to any child who needs them as part of COVID-19 federal aid, but this ends June 30.

Over the past year, Colorado districts have seen 20-40% more children utilizing school meals. These are children whose families are struggling with rising costs and could go hungry without this important program. We can do something about it!

HB22-1414 would refer a question to voters in November to fund a program to reimburse every meal served by a participating school district, support the ability to purchase healthy and local food, include student and parent's voices in decisions around what meals are served, and ensure fair wages to front line workers.

Recent polling found more than 60% of voters support school meals for free in all public schools. Voters support this proposal, but most important this program would mean healthier and happier children!

Why a School Meals for All Ballot Initiative?



It's an investment in public education of children. Children need healthy food to learn in school and *School Meals for All* would ensure our investment is paying off.



It removes Stigma. When schools can serve every child the same food there are fewer divisions between students based on income. Low-income students face incredible stigma. We can help by ensuring it does not start in the lunch line.



More students will get the food they need. Many school districts have already implemented *School Meals for All* and they have seen a 20% increase in participation when school meals are available to all students.



Less Administrative Costs. When all children can get school meals, school nutrition departments can spend more time developing delicious meals and less time collecting applications or money in the lunch line or and tracking down lunch debts from families.



No more lunch debt. *School Meals for All* would eliminate lunch debts so families can focus on other needs like housing, utilities, and more. It would also prevent students from feeling stigma or shame when their families can't pay for lunch.



More Resources for Schools and Staff. When schools have adequate reimbursements for all meals served, they can spend less on administrative costs and instead fund staffing, healthy meals, and scratch cooking.



Healthier and Thriving Students. According to studies, when children are given healthy food they do better in school and stay healthier overall. Healthy food is as important as any other tool for children to learn, grow and thrive.



Too many children are left out of our current school meals programs. The free and reduced-price meals program income threshold is too low to truly account for children and families facing food insecurity.



The Time is Now for Healthy School Meals for All Colorado Children!

*HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS HELP COLORADO FAMILIES FACING FOOD INSECURITY

	Maximum income for a family of 3 to qualify for free school meals: \$28,548 (CDE)
	Maximum income for a family of 3 to qualify for reduced price school meals \$40,626 (CDE)
	Income needed for a family of 2 to live in Colorado \$70,000 (MIT)

What would a School Meals for All Ballot Initiative do?



Create Healthy School Meals for All Program for Colorado School Districts. All participating districts would have school meals available free of cost and be guaranteed 100% reimbursements for all meals served to students (*at the federal reimbursement level*).



Increase Reimbursement for Districts to Purchase Locally Sourced Food. School districts could participate in a local procurement grant program to purchase food from local farms and ranchers to make healthy meals. This will strengthen Colorado's food systems, the economy, and student health.



Grants for School Workforce Investments. School districts could receive grants to increase pay for the staff who work hard to serve and prepare meals for students. This will help districts with staffing shortages, and provide much needed support front-line workers and their families.



Fund Equipment for Preparing Healthy Meals. School districts can get funding for equipment and training to provide their students with healthier meals.



Encourage Parent and Student Input on School Meals. Districts that receive grants to purchase locally sourced foods will form Student and Parent Advisory Committees to bring community voices to their school meal programs.



Ensure a Fair Funding Structure. The ballot initiative would raise \$100 million per year to cover the costs of the program through the closure of tax loopholes for high-income earners (\$300,000 or more).

Voters support funding healthy school meals - and kids need us to take action to address food insecurity! Act now to pass HB22-1414!



Please sign up here (<https://bit.ly/HealthySchoolMealsforAllCO>) to support Healthy School Meals for All HB22-1414. *If you have questions please reach out to Karen Wick (Karen@swift-strategies.com) or Becky Long (becky@slpublicaffairs.com)*

*CDE is Colorado Department of Education, MIT is Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator