



Healthy School Meals for All

Healthy students are better learners. One of the best ways to guarantee that students stay focused and engaged in the classroom is to ensure they have a nutritious breakfast and lunch.

Since the end of pandemic-era waivers that provided school meals at no cost to all students, New Jersey has seen a steep decline in students participating in school breakfast programs. Low participation in school meal programs, like breakfast, can cause states to lose out on substantial federal funding and can leave some children without the health benefits of breakfast. We can support children, families, and school nutrition programs by returning to Healthy School Meals for All permanently.

Here's why Hunger Free New Jersey supports Healthy School Meals for All:

No-Cost School Meals is an Investment in Student Health and Academic Success

School meals are essential for student health and learning. Studies show that students who participate in healthy school meal programs have improved attendance, behavior, academic performance, and academic achievement.

School Meals are Healthy

School meals meet strict national nutrition guidelines including parameters for calories, fat, and sodium. Studies show program participants are less likely to have nutrient inadequacies and are more likely to consume fruits, vegetables, and milk at breakfast and lunch.

No-Cost Meals Eliminate Stigmas and Barriers

The existing policy for school meals, where some children are expected to pay while others receive their meals for free, creates stigma and shame for those students who rely on school meals to meet their basic needs, and serves as a barrier for those students who are not eligible but still experiencing food insecurity.

Eliminates School Meal Debt

The families likely to accrue unpaid meal fees are often the ones who are living just above the eligibility threshold for free or reduced-price school meals but are still struggling financially. Providing meals at no cost to all students frees both families and schools from the burden of school meal debt and ensures no child falls through the cracks.

New Jersey must establish and fund a permanent, statewide Healthy School Meals for All program to ensure all students have the healthy food they need to learn and thrive.

Hunger Free New Jersey is the state's leading private, non-profit advocacy organization working to ensure all New Jersey residents have healthy food to eat, every single day. If you have any questions, please reach out to our director, Lisa Pitz, at lpitz@cfanj.org