



April 18, 2024

Senator Duff, Senator Looney, Senator Osten, Representative Rojas, Representative Walker

As the professionals who are responsible for providing school meals to CT students, SNACT members have seen first hand the impact of providing universal breakfast for all students and lunch for students who qualify at the reduced level. More children are eating breakfast at school and starting their days with the nutrition they need due to universal breakfast. In a recent SNACT survey 90% of districts report an increase in breakfast participation this year, which directly translates to students who are well nourished and better prepared to learn.

Over the past few years CT has done a great job prioritizing child health and well being, including our efforts to ensure that **ALL** students are fed in school - regardless of the district they live in or their family's ability to pay. Without continued funding **180,000 CT students** will lose access to breakfast at no-cost in SY 24-25 and **12,000 reduced priced students** will lose access to lunch at no-cost.

Our members see the impact of funding and food policies on students every day - we know the difference between a fed child and an unfed one. Not continuing funding will have an immediate and significant impact on students and families. One director described the impact that ceasing funding will have:

*"Our district would have many children hungry at the start of their school day and this will negatively impact their ability to learn. Eliminating the covering the cost of lunch for reduced students would result in fewer students participating in school lunch."*

Ending funding for breakfast and lunch for students means that a **family of 4 earning a pretax income of \$39,001 a year will LOSE access to meals at no-cost**. Again, our members are the people who have to tell our families they do not qualify. As one director said:

*"It's heartbreaking to me when a family makes just a small amount above the income guideline to qualify for free or reduced and I have to inform them they have been denied."*

The truest and longest lasting cost of losing funding for school meals falls on our students. We urge the Connecticut Legislature and Governor Lamont to continue to take the necessary steps to appropriate the funds for school meals. We hope that moving forward Connecticut joins other states in guaranteeing that every student in Connecticut has access to healthy school meals at no charge as an integral part of the educational experience.

Thank you  
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