



# Healthy School Meals for All

Erin Kennedy Hysom | Senior Child Nutrition Policy Analyst | [ehysom@frac.org](mailto:ehysom@frac.org)

May 4, 2023

# What is “Healthy School Meals for All”?

---

Healthy School Meals for All refers to offering free breakfast and lunch to all students, regardless of household income



# Benefits of Healthy School Meals for All

- Ensures all students are hunger-free and ready to learn
- Reduces stigma
- Ends unpaid school meal debt
- Eases administrative burdens
- Supports innovative service models
- Advances racial equity



Photo Credit: Livingston Parish Public Schools

“[Serving free meals to all students] improved employee morale in not having to tell a child that they owe money”

- Peoria Unified School District

# Large Districts Report Numerous Benefits

Percent Reporting	Reported Benefit
92%	Makes it Easier for Parents/Guardians
88%	Decreases Child Hunger
86%	Eliminates Stigma Associated with School Meals
86%	Supports Household Finances
84%	Eliminates School Meal Debt
79%	Eases Administrative Burden
70%	Improves Students' Food and Nutrient Intake
67%	Strengthens FNS' Image and Relationships
65%	Supports Academic Achievement

# FRAC Polling Shows Public Support

---



**63%**

**of voters nationwide support legislation that would make free school meals permanently available to all students.**

# Three Pathways

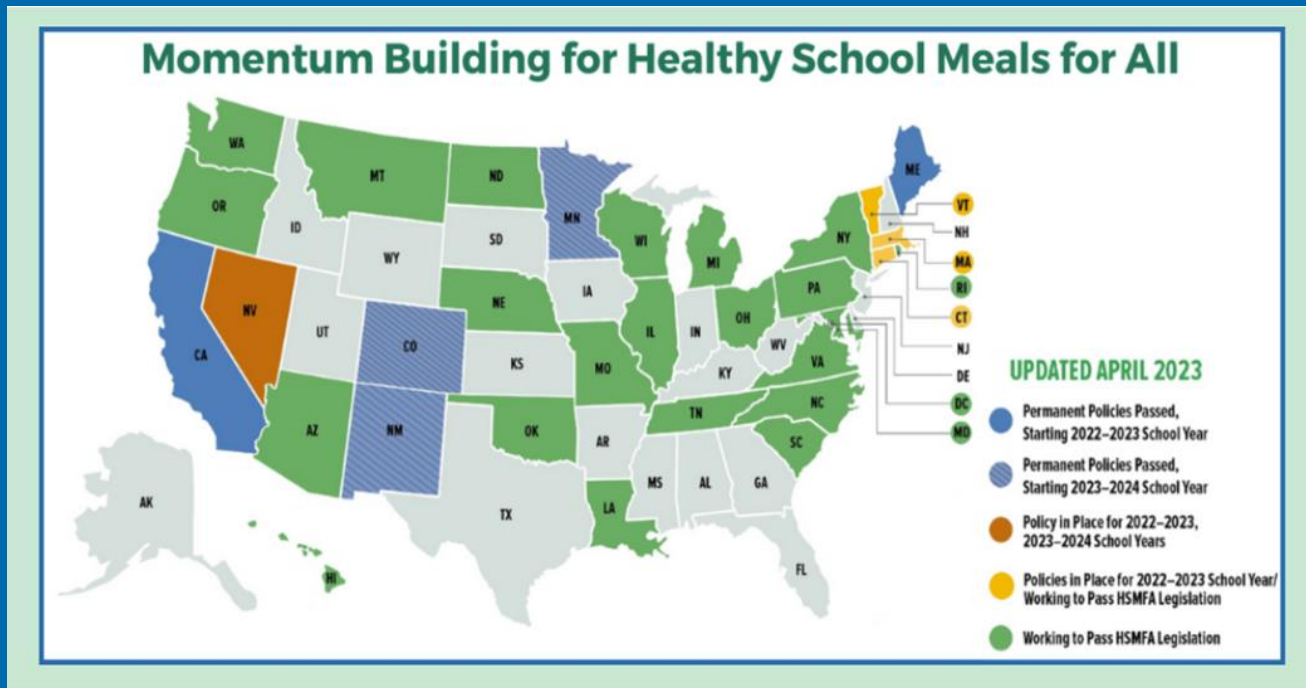
---

**Federal legislation-** all states, all at once

**State legislation-** each state, one at a time

**Incremental steps at state or fed level-** i.e. expand CEP

# The Status of Healthy School Meals for All Across the US





# The Status of Healthy School Meals for All in the Northeast

---



The following states had HSMFA efforts:

- New York
- Pennsylvania
- Maryland
- Washington D.C.
- Virginia

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) =  
Healthy School Meals for All

# What is the Community Eligibility Provision?

---

*Community eligibility allows high-need schools to offer breakfast and lunch to all students at no charge. Any school district, group of schools in a district, or school with 40 percent or more "identified students" – children who are certified eligible for free school meals without a household application – can choose to participate.*

# CEP Adoption in SY 2022-2023

---

## Nationwide:

- > 40,000 schools nationwide
- > 6,400 districts
- > 19.8 million students

## Northeast Region:

- 1,586 eligible districts
  - 1,124 participating (71%)
- 7,859 eligible schools
  - 6,598 participating (84%)

# Federal Proposals Affecting CEP

## CEP Proposed Rule

- USDA estimates that an additional 9 million students and 20,000 more schools could participate

## *School Meals Expansion Act of 2023*

- Increases CEP multiplier from 1.6 to 2.5
- Codifies CEP eligibility at 25%



Photo Credit: Fulton County Schools

## In Conclusion...

- Healthy Schools Meals for All is gaining momentum across the country
- CEP is an important method to achieve Healthy School Meals for All
- Schools & Districts should share their story on how Healthy School Meals for All affects their programs and community

# Connect With Us!

## **Food Research & Action Center**

1200 18th Street, NW, Suite 400 | Washington, DC 20036

202.986.2200 | [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)



[@fractweets](https://twitter.com/fractweets)



[facebook.com/foodresearchandactioncenter](https://facebook.com/foodresearchandactioncenter)



[@fracgram](https://www.instagram.com/fracgram)



[linkedin.com/company/food-research-and-action-center](https://linkedin.com/company/food-research-and-action-center)