

**South Dakota School Lunch Coalition**

1/23/2025

Dear Members of the South Dakota Legislature,

Every day, nearly one in six children in South Dakota faces hunger—a barrier no child should have to overcome to succeed in school. Hunger impacts academic performance, attendance, and overall well-being, yet thousands of students depend on schools as their primary source of nourishment.

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, strongly support the proposed legislation to reimburse school districts for costs incurred by providing meals to students who are eligible for reduced-price meals (\$0.30 at breakfast and \$0.40 at lunch). This measure is a critical step in ensuring that every student has equitable access to the nutrition they need to thrive.

This legislation would:

- Encourage families to complete Free & Reduced-Priced Meal applications.
- Ensure schools can meet student needs by reimbursing costs for reduced-price meals.
- Address funding gaps in federal programs, guaranteeing more equitable access to meals.
- Strengthen South Dakota's commitment to student success through nutrition.

The benefits are undeniable. Universal free meal programs during the pandemic showed improved attendance, better academic performance, reduced food insecurity, and healthier, happier students. Nationwide, teachers and staff reported that well-nourished students were better prepared to learn and excel.

This proposed legislation is a vital step in ensuring that all South Dakota students can reach their full potential, regardless of their economic circumstances. By reimbursing schools for the costs of providing these essential meals, we can create a stronger foundation for academic achievement and long-term community success.

We urge lawmakers to support and pass this important measure. The undersigned stand ready to advocate for this legislation and work together to ensure its success.

Sincerely,

- Members of the South Dakota School Lunch Coalition

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Endorsed by:

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