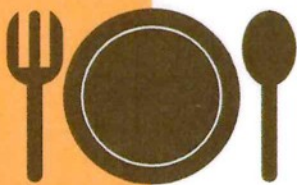


# EXPANDED ACCESS TO FREE SCHOOL LUNCH IN SD



## A SMART, CONSERVATIVE INVESTMENT IN OUR FUTURE

House Bill 1089 ensures that South Dakota school districts receive fair reimbursement for providing free or reduced-price meals to eligible students. By ensuring that local schools manage these programs efficiently, this bill prevents unnecessary bureaucracy while supporting working families. Instead of creating additional government dependency, HB 1089 is a targeted, fiscally responsible solution that helps children succeed without wasteful spending.

## PROMOTING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Strong families and personal responsibility are core South Dakota values, but no child can focus on learning if they're hungry. A well-fed student is a better student. Research shows that access to school meals improves focus, test scores, and long-term educational success. A 2021 Brookings Institution study found that students in school-wide meal programs significantly outperformed their peers in math and reading.

## SUPPORTING SOUTH DAKOTA FAMILIES WITHOUT RAISING TAXES

With inflation straining household budgets, South Dakota families should not have to choose between paying bills and ensuring their children have nutritious meals. By leveraging existing federal programs, HB 1089 offers relief without increasing the tax burden on hardworking South Dakotans.

## REDUCING GOVERNMENT WASTE AND ENSURING LOCAL CONTROL

South Dakotans know that big government solutions often fail. This bill allows school districts—not Washington bureaucrats—to implement meal programs in a way that best fits their communities. Instead of blanket mandates, it ensures that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently, with funding going directly to schools that need it.

## INVESTING IN HEALTHY KIDS, STRONG COMMUNITIES

South Dakota thrives when we invest in the next generation. A 2023 study in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics found that children receiving consistent, nutritious school meals had fewer health complications and lower emergency room visits. By promoting healthy eating habits early, we help build strong, self-reliant citizens.

## ADDRESSING RURAL AND SMALL-TOWN HUNGER

Access to quality meals is especially important in rural South Dakota, where grocery stores and food pantries may be limited. In the 2019-2020 school year, 41% of South Dakota students qualified for free or reduced-price meals, with rural districts seeing some of the highest participation rates (KELOLAND, 2023). This bill ensures that rural and small-town schools receive support without unnecessary government red tape.

## CONCLUSION

HB 1089 is a common-sense, conservative policy that aligns with South Dakota values: strong families, fiscal responsibility, and local control. By ensuring that no child goes hungry in the classroom, we are making a smart investment in our state's future—one that supports families, strengthens education, and keeps government efficient.

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