

Cafeteria Connection

Connecting you to your child's school lunchroom



THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL MEALS: **FREE FOR ALL STUDENTS?**

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, millions of families were suddenly struggling to put food on the table. To curb the effects of the pandemic and ensure kids didn't go hungry, the USDA made special provisions to provide free meals to all children regardless of income. **While pandemic-related free meal provisions have since expired, the possibility of free school meals becoming a reality remains.**

The free school meals were a lifeline for many families during the peak pandemic years, especially now as inflation outpaces salary growth and continues to drive up the price of food. The government has long provided free and reduced-price school meals to students

whose families meet income eligibility guidelines. Each year, our school promotes the availability of free and reduced-price meals. This can be a difficult task though. Families must fill out an application and many are reluctant to share their personal income information. Some families may make too much money to qualify for free or reduced meals, yet struggle to pay for school meals. Universal free meals would remove these challenges.

While work continues for Congressional action to bring universal free meals nationwide, some states are taking matters into their own hands. California, Maine, and Colorado have passed universal free school meals legislation at the state level. Vermont, Massachusetts, and Nevada have legislation to cover the costs of meals this school year. Many other states have proposals in the works – a signal from constituents that there's a strong desire to alleviate and end childhood hunger.

