



The State of Healthy School Meals for All

California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, and Vermont Lead the Way

FEBRUARY 2024 | WWW.FRAC.ORG

The State of Healthy School Meals for All

California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, and Vermont Lead the Way

FEBRUARY 2024

Acknowledgments

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) gratefully acknowledges major dedicated support of its work to advance Healthy School Meals for All from the following:

- ▶ Annie E. Casey Foundation
- ▶ The From Now On Fund of the Tides Foundation
- ▶ General Mills, Inc.
- ▶ The JPB Foundation
- ▶ Kaiser Permanente National Community Benefit Fund at The East Bay Community Foundation
- ▶ Kellanova Fund
- ▶ Newman's Own Foundation

This report was prepared by Alexis Bylander, Crystal FitzSimons, and Clarissa Hayes of the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC). The findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of FRAC alone.

Photo credits: FRAC is grateful to Aurora Public Schools, Western Foothills Regional School Unit #10, and Project Bread for submitting photos for use in this report.

For research citation: Bylander, A., FitzSimons, C., & Hayes, C. (2024). *The State of Healthy School Meals for All: California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, and Vermont Lead the Way*. Food Research & Action Center. <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/HSMFA-Report-2024.pdf>

About FRAC

The Food Research & Action Center improves the nutrition, health, and well-being of people struggling against poverty-related hunger in the United States through advocacy, partnerships, and by advancing bold and equitable policy solutions. For more information about FRAC, or to [sign up](#) for FRAC's e-newsletters, go to www.frac.org.

For more information about Healthy School Meals for All policies and campaigns, go to www.FreeSchoolMealsforAll.org.



FRAC
Food Research & Action Center

Executive Summary

School meals have always played an important role in reducing childhood hunger, supporting good nutrition, and ensuring that students can get the most out of their school day. For more than two school years during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools were able to offer meals to all students at no charge through the pandemic-related child nutrition waivers offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This served as a trial run for nationwide Healthy School Meals for All, and it was a resounding success.

Students, regardless of household income, had access to nutritious meals to help them thrive at school, whether they were attending in person or virtually. Parents did not have to worry about packing lunches or paying for meals, and school nutrition professionals were able to give a meal to any child that needed one without worrying about account balances.

Several states decided they did not want to return to pre-pandemic school meal operations, which required determining children's eligibility for free, reduced-price, or paid meal categories, and introduced legislation to permanently provide free school meals for all students.

Four states — California, Maine, Massachusetts, and Vermont — passed policies to make school meals available to all students at no charge, regardless of household income. Nevada used pandemic relief funds to extend Healthy School Meals for All through the 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 school years. Four additional states — Colorado, Minnesota, Michigan, and New Mexico — have also passed Healthy School Meals for All policies that started with the 2023–2024 school year.

In total, there are eight states to date that have passed ongoing Healthy School Meals for All policies, and legislation has been introduced in many more. This report looks at participation data for California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, and Vermont, the states with a Healthy School Meals for All policy during the 2022–2023 school year.

KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ School lunch participation in California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, and Vermont — the five states that implemented Healthy School Meals for All policies during the 2022–2023 school year — **INCREASED** compared to pre-pandemic participation levels.



- ▶ School breakfast participation **INCREASED** in four of the five states.
- ▶ The five Healthy School Meals for All states continued to have a gap between breakfast and lunch participation, showing there is still **ROOM FOR GROWTH** in the School Breakfast Program.
- ▶ The response to Healthy School Meals for All policies has been **POSITIVE**, with state child nutrition agencies noting many benefits to providing school meals at no cost to all families and public opinion polling showing broad support.

SCHOOL LUNCH

participation in California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, and Vermont **INCREASED** during the 2022–2023 school year compared to pre-pandemic levels.

SCHOOL BREAKFAST

participation **INCREASED** in four of the five states.

 The five Healthy School Meals for All states continued to have a gap between breakfast and lunch participation, showing there is still **ROOM FOR GROWTH** in the School Breakfast Program.

 The response to Healthy School Meals for All policies has been **POSITIVE**, with state child nutrition agencies noting many benefits to providing school meals at no cost to all families and public opinion polling showing broad support.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED

The increase in school meal participation in Healthy School Meals for All states shows the success and popularity of the approach and highlights the need for Congress to pass legislation so that all students, regardless of where they live, have access to the nutrition they need to learn and thrive. Until Congress acts, states should continue to pass Healthy School Meals for All policies that ensure the children in their state have access to nutritious food that helps them succeed at school.

“Healthy School Meals for All has allowed Massachusetts to increase participation, expand Farm to School, address staff shortages, replace aging equipment and enhance scratch cooking. All of this is helping to revolutionize menus and change opinions about the nutritional quality of school meals.”¹

— Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



About This Report

This report measures the reach of school breakfast and lunch in states that had Healthy School Meals for All policies in place for the 2022–2023 school year. It looks at participation data from September to May, primarily comparing pre-COVID-19 pandemic operations in the 2018–2019 school year to the first year of Healthy School Meals for All policies in the 2022–2023 school year. Information from the school years in between is included as reference points in [Appendix 1](#). For more information on which programs are included and how data were calculated, see the [Technical Notes](#).

School Meals Are Critical to Student Nutrition and Learning

School meals play an important role in reducing childhood hunger, supporting good nutrition, and ensuring students are ready to get the most out of their school day.

[Research](#) links participation in school meals to positive educational and health outcomes for our nation’s children such as:

-  **IMPROVING** academic achievement, attendance, and student behavior at school;
-  **DECREASING** childhood food insecurity;
-  **EATING** more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and milk; and
-  **REDUCING** visits to the school nurse.

School Meals Should Not Be a Means-Tested Part of the School Day

As vital as the school nutrition programs are to ensuring children’s access to nutritious meals, too many children in need miss out because of the programs’ current structure. Many struggling families do not meet the federal [eligibility threshold](#) for free school meals, which required a family of three to earn less than \$33,000 annually during the 2022–2023 school year.²

With the eligibility for free school meals set so low, many families need access to school meals but cannot afford them. Healthy food should not be a means-tested part of the school day as it is integral to student success just like access to textbooks and technology, which are standard parts of the school day.

The COVID-19 Pandemic Changed the Landscape of School Meals

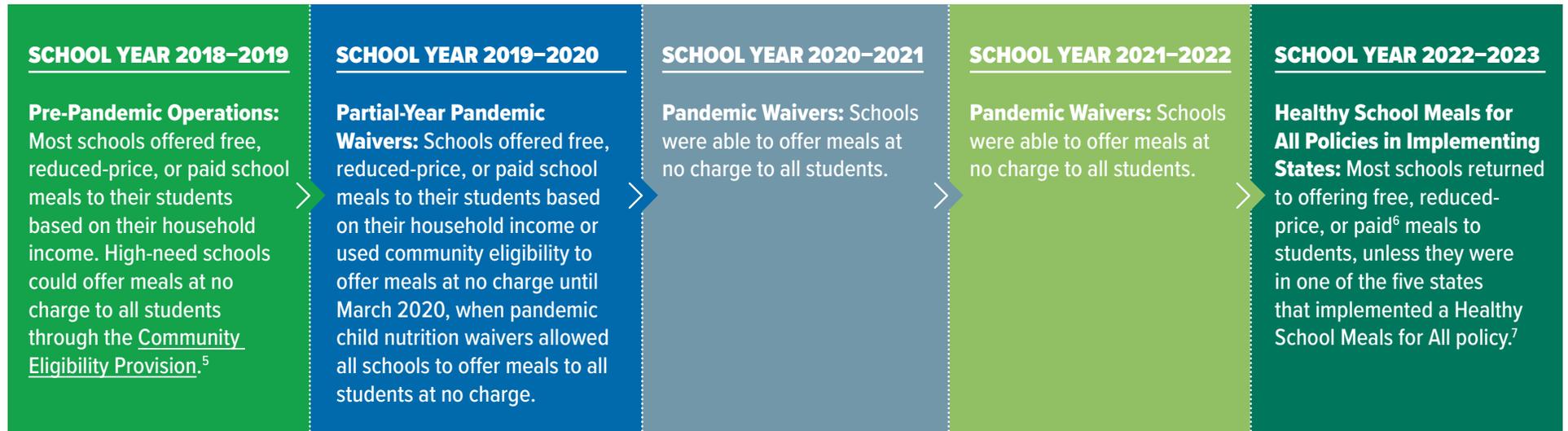
To help keep child hunger at bay during the pandemic, USDA issued waivers in March 2020 to allow schools³ to provide meals at no charge to all children, no matter their household income. Without these waivers, the alarming spikes in childhood hunger caused by the economic and health fallout from COVID-19 would have been even worse.

The pandemic highlighted the critical role that school meals play for children and acted as a trial run for Healthy School Meals for All nationwide. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, school nutrition professionals, and other stakeholders realized they did not want to go back to a tiered payment system for school meals, driving energy and support for statewide Healthy School Meals for All campaigns.



USDA waivers allowing schools to offer meals at no charge to all students expired in June 2022. Unless states had enacted a Healthy School Meals for All policy, most schools went back to normal school nutrition operations for the 2022–2023 school year: offering meals at no charge to some students; charging a reduced-price fee to some; and charging others for the cost of their meal.⁴

TIMELINE



Benefits of Healthy School Meals for All

There are many benefits to offering school breakfast and lunch to all students at no charge to families.

- ▶ **Ensures all students are hunger-free and ready to get the most out of their school day:** It is hard for students to learn and fully benefit from educational investments when they do not have the focus or energy to concentrate because they are hungry. It only takes one hungry student who cannot pay attention to disrupt learning in an entire classroom, so everyone benefits when all students are well-fed.
- ▶ **Reduces stigma in the cafeteria:** Students from households with low incomes, particularly those in middle and high school, often worry that participating in school meals will negatively identify them among their peers. As a result, students feel shame or skip meals. When all students have access to free meals, regardless of household income, any stigma about eating school meals is reduced, and the cafeteria can be a more welcoming space for everyone.
- ▶ **Ends school meal debt:** School nutrition departments no longer need to track and follow up on school meal debt, which is a significant problem for families and schools. Dealing with school meal debt takes time away from serving high-quality nutritious meals and building a sense of community in cafeterias.
- ▶ **Supports innovative service models:** When all students can eat free meals at school, it is easier for school nutrition departments to use innovative service models such as breakfast in the classroom and grab-and-go kiosks to serve more students. As participation increases, economies of scale can allow for serving more fresh produce and quality menu items that appeal to students.

The California Department of Education noted that Healthy School Meals for All “helps to remove stigma of school meals, eliminates school meal debt, increases access to healthy complete meals, and elevates the importance of school nutrition and culinary professionals and the essential role school meals and food service has in a holistic educational programming for student achievement.”⁸

- ▶ **Advances racial equity:** Healthy School Meals for All policies are critical to advancing racial equity and justice, ensuring that all students have access to the nutrition they need to succeed at school and beyond.

Public Support for Healthy School Meals for All

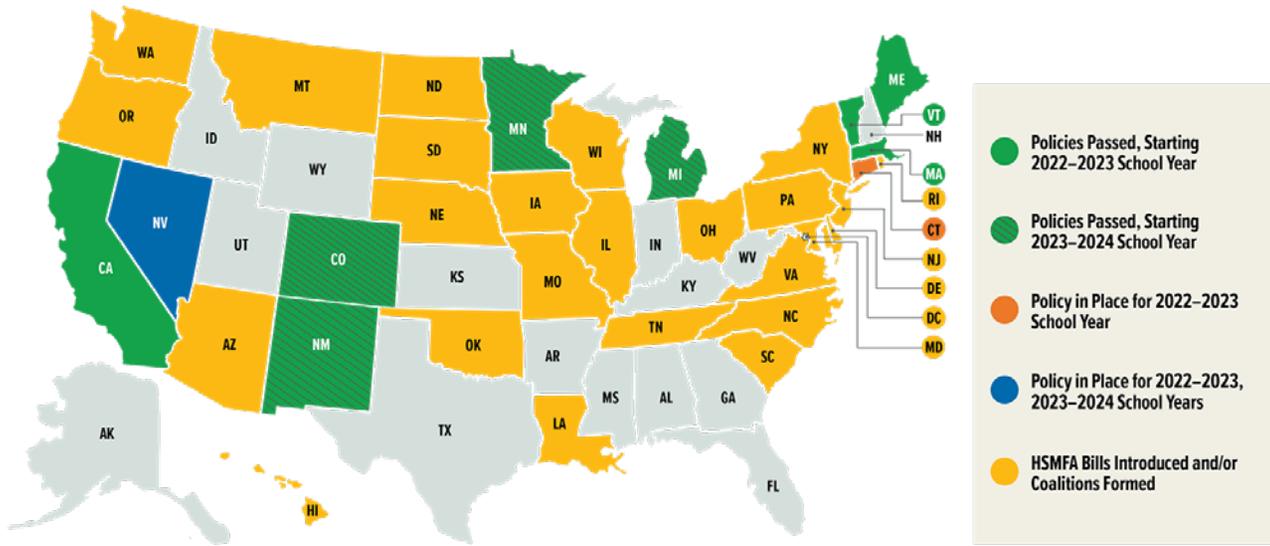
In 2021, FRAC conducted nationwide public opinion polling and found that 63 percent of voters nationwide support legislation that would allow schools to offer meals to all students at no charge. Since then, several states have conducted their own state-specific polling and found public support numbers that are even higher. For example, [eight in 10 Pennsylvanian voters](#) support expanding the state’s free breakfast program to include lunch; [81 percent of voters in North Carolina](#) support school meals for all; and [87 percent of Ohio parents of school-age children](#) agree that schools should provide school meals at no cost to all students, regardless of the student’s ability to pay.



State child nutrition agencies noted the following benefits of Healthy School Meals for All in their states:⁹

- REDUCES** childhood hunger
 - ▶ California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, Vermont
- EASIER** for parents and guardians
 - ▶ California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada
- ELIMINATES** any stigma associated with school meals
 - ▶ California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, Vermont
- EASES** administrative work
 - ▶ California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada
- SUPPORTS** academic achievement
 - ▶ California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, Vermont
- ELIMINATES** school meal debt
 - ▶ California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, Vermont
- IMPROVES** student behavior
 - ▶ California, Massachusetts, Nevada, Vermont
- SUPPORTS** Food and Nutrition Services finances
 - ▶ California, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada
- INCREASES** number of fruits, vegetables, and milk students consume
 - ▶ California, Massachusetts, Nevada
- ADVANCES** racial equity
 - ▶ California, Massachusetts, Nevada
- IMPROVES** staff morale/job satisfaction
 - ▶ California, Massachusetts, Nevada

States Are Leading the Way With Healthy School Meals for All Policies



● **California and Maine** were the first states in the country to pass Healthy School Meals for All policies in 2021.

● **Massachusetts and Vermont** passed one-year Healthy School Meals for All policies to continue offering free meals to students during the 2022–2023 school year, after the pandemic waivers had ended. They later passed permanent Healthy School Meals for All policies that secured meals for all students at no cost.

● **Nevada** used pandemic relief funds to offer meals at no charge for the 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 school years. Unless the state

dedicates additional funds, schools will return to pre-pandemic operations in the 2024–2025 school year.

● **Connecticut** used pandemic relief funds to provide free school meals for parts of the 2022–2023 school year.

● **Colorado, Minnesota, Michigan, and New Mexico** have passed Healthy School Meals for All policies that began with the 2023–2024 school year. These states are not included in this report because the school year is still in progress and data are not yet available.



The **Connecticut legislature** allocated \$30 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in the 2022 legislative session to support

households transitioning from meals at no cost to all students back to submitting free and reduced-price school meals applications and paying for meals according to household income for the beginning of the 2022–2023 school year. During a special legislative session, with the support of the governor, the legislature allocated an additional \$60 million in ARPA funds to restart offering meals at no cost to all students resuming March 1, 2023, and through the remainder of the 2022–2023 school year.

Since there was a disruption in funding to support meals at no cost to all students, and school meals were not continuously offered to all students at no charge during the school year, Connecticut is not included in the data tables in this report.

Connecticut allocated \$16 million in funding to offer free breakfasts to all students for the 2023–2024 school year. The state also eliminated the reduced-price copay for the school year, meaning that students from households between 131 percent and 185 percent of the poverty line and qualifying for reduced-price meals, can eat school lunch at no cost. Advocates in Connecticut continue to campaign for a permanent Healthy School Meals for All policy that includes breakfast and lunch.



The Community Eligibility Provision

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows high-poverty schools to offer breakfast and lunch free of charge to all students. During the 2022–2023 school year, any district, group of schools in a district, or school with 40 percent or more “identified students” — children who are eligible for free school meals who already are identified by means other than an individual household application — can choose to participate. USDA lowered the eligibility threshold to 25 percent in the fall of 2023 and gave states the option to implement the new threshold during the 2023–2024 school year.

“Identified students” include those who are in two categories:

- ▶ children who are directly certified for free school meals through data matching because their households receive SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or Food Distribution Program on Indian

Reservations benefits, or in most states, Medicaid benefits; and

- ▶ children who are certified for free meals without an application because they are homeless, migrant, enrolled in Head Start, or in foster care.

Reimbursements to the school are calculated by multiplying the percentage of identified students by 1.6 to determine the percentage of meals that will be reimbursed at the federal free rate. For example, a school with 50 percent identified students would be reimbursed at the free rate for 80 percent of the meals eaten (50 multiplied by 1.6 is 80), and at the paid rate for 20 percent.

School districts also may choose to participate districtwide or group schools however they choose if the district or group has an overall identified student percentage of 40 percent or higher during the 2022–2023 school year (moving to 25 percent under the new threshold announced in the fall 2023).

“[Healthy School Meals for All] has helped our family with two school-aged kids quite a bit. Inflation is making groceries quite expensive for a family of four, and free school lunch helps economically and saves us precious morning prep time.”

— Connecticut parent

“Healthy School meals for all is essential ... throughout the [U.S.] because it shows the citizens and individuals young and old that there is a sense of belonging, together with compassion, love, kindness, acceptance and respect.”

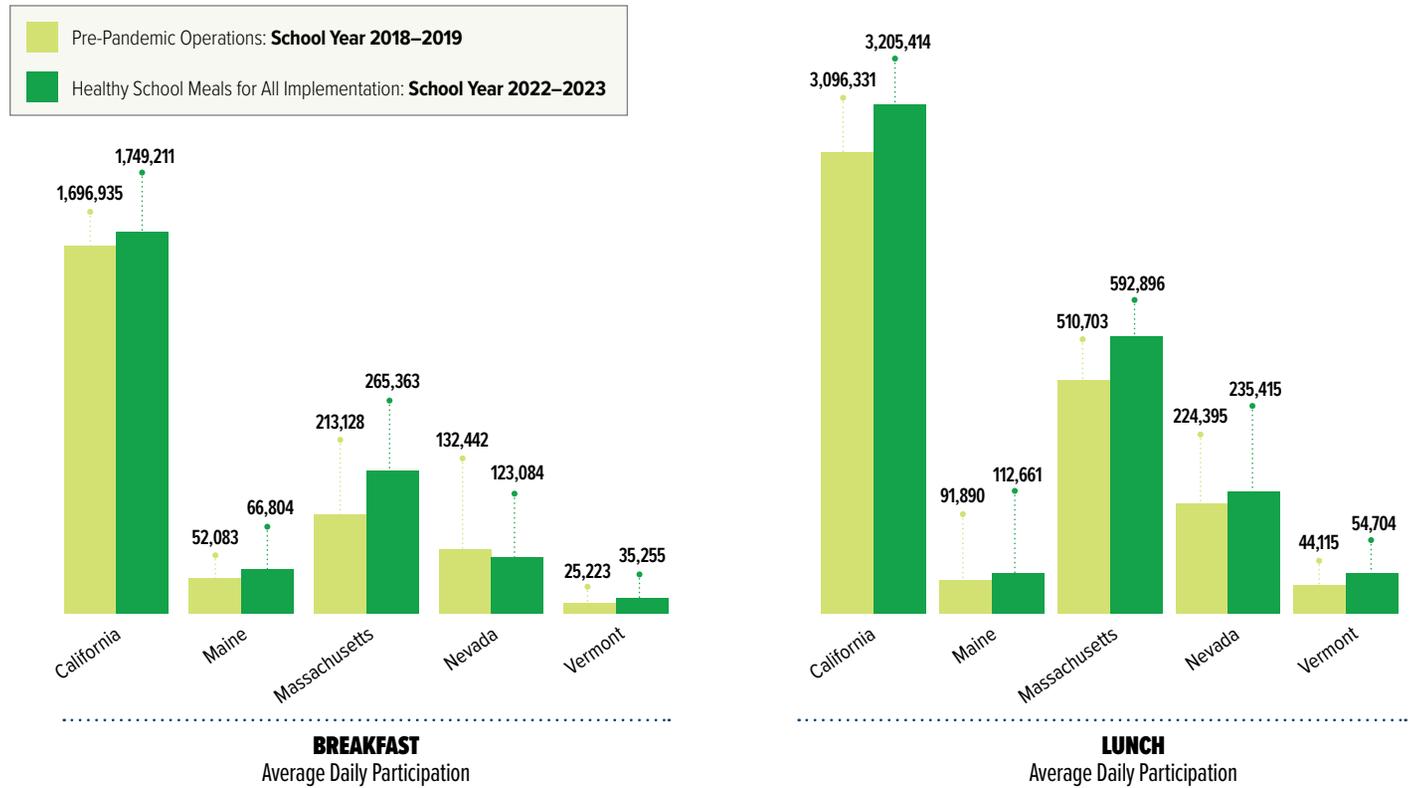
— Vermont advocate

“Prior to the pandemic, I struggled with school meal debt. ... I felt like we were drowning. Despite being a single mother, my income was relatively decent.

Therefore, [my daughter] didn’t qualify for free or reduced school meals. Yet, high housing and health care costs consumed the majority of my income.”

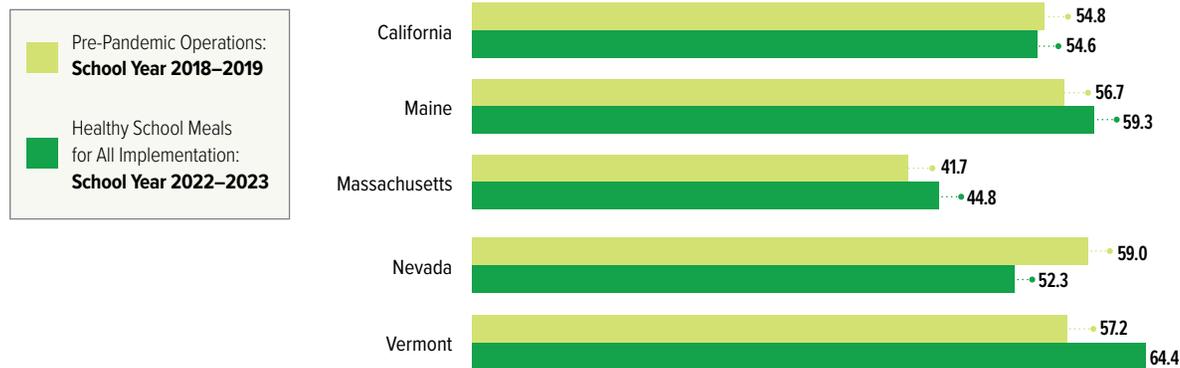
— Massachusetts parent

Chart 1: School Meal Participation in States With Healthy School Meals for All Policies



- ▶ School **breakfast** participation **INCREASED** in California, Maine, Massachusetts, and Vermont. These four states provided breakfast to a total of 129,264 more students, compared to pre-pandemic operations.
- ▶ Overall breakfast participation **INCREASED** by 6 percent, even with Nevada’s drop in participation.
- ▶ School **lunch** participation **INCREASED** in all five states by a total of 233,656 students or **6 percent**, compared to pre-pandemic operations.

Chart 2: Breakfast to Lunch Participation Ratio



- ▶ The five Healthy School Meals for All states continued to have a gap between breakfast and lunch participation, with two states losing ground.
- ▶ California’s school breakfast to lunch ratio decreased even as breakfast participation increased because the 3 percent increase in school breakfast participation did not keep pace with the state’s 4 percent increase in school lunch participation.
- ▶ Nevada’s school breakfast to lunch ratio decreased due to the combined impact of a drop in breakfast participation and an increase in lunch participation.

Recommendations

There are several pathways to Healthy School Meals for All, and the following strategies should be pursued to ensure all students have access to the nutrition they need:

- ▶ **Congress should pass a nationwide Healthy School Meals for All policy.** The five states that implemented Healthy School Meals for All policies in the 2022–2023 school year, along with the four states that have passed policies implemented in the 2023–2024 school year and the positive polling data, demonstrate the public support and the benefits of serving healthy meals at no cost to students during the school day. Students in all states need access to school breakfast and lunch to grow and thrive.
- ▶ **More states should continue to pass Healthy School Meals for All policies.** States often lead the way, enacting policies that support children and families that become the models for

national legislation. Until Congress acts, states can continue to pass Healthy School Meals for All legislation, which to date have passed as standalone bills, have been included in budget bills, and have been approved by voters through a ballot measure. Healthy School Meals for All legislation has received bipartisan support in several states.

- ▶ **The Community Eligibility Provision needs to be financially viable for more schools.** In September 2023, USDA released a [final rule](#) that lowered the Community Eligibility Provision eligibility threshold from 40 percent to 25 percent Identified Student Percentage. This allows more high-need schools to serve healthy school meals to all students at no cost to families through community eligibility; however, the multiplier that determines community eligibility schools' federal reimbursement must be increased by Congress from 1.6 to 2.5 so that it is financially feasible for more eligible schools to participate.

- ▶ **School districts should take steps to increase breakfast participation.** The first five states to implement Healthy School Meals for All policies show that even when breakfast is offered at no cost, students still participate less than they do in lunch. There are additional barriers to breakfast participation, such as students having enough time to get breakfast in the school cafeteria before the school day begins. Innovative breakfast models, such as breakfast in the classroom, grab and go breakfast, and second chance breakfast, can help close the gap between breakfast and lunch participation.

FRAC supports the following federal legislation to increase the number of students with access to free meals:

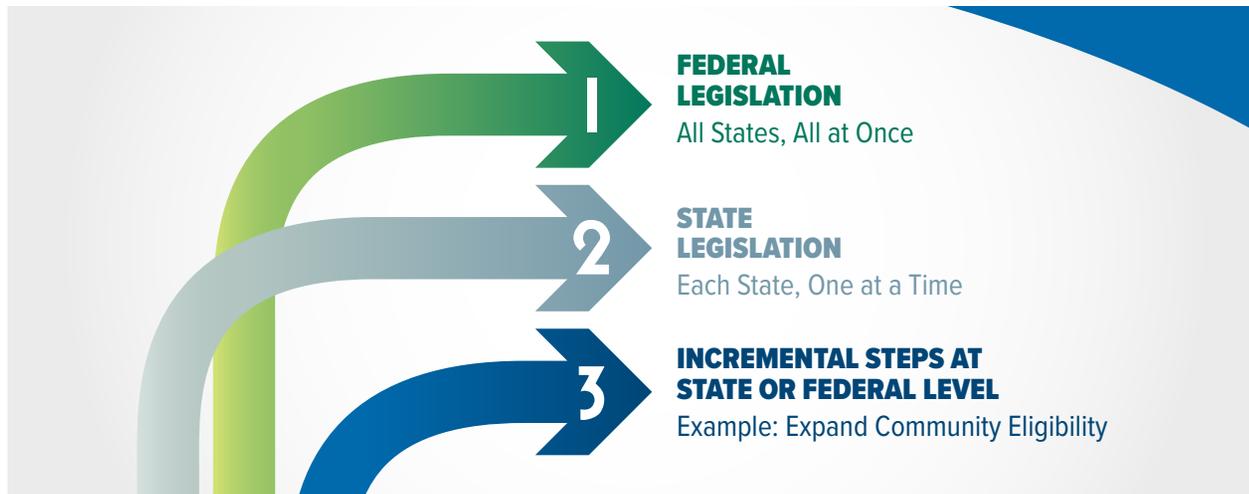
Universal School Meals Program Act ([S. 1568/H.R. 3204](#)), which would create Healthy School Meals for All nationwide. The bill has been reintroduced by Sen. Sanders (I-VT) and Rep. Omar (D-MN), along with Sens. Gillibrand (D-NY) and Heinrich (D-NM) and Reps. McGovern (D-MA) and Moore (D-WI).

School Meals Expansion Act ([H.R. 2567](#)) introduced by Rep. McGarvey (D-KY), which would increase federal funding for community eligibility schools.

No Hungry Kids in School Act ([H.R. 3112](#)) introduced by Reps. Porter (D-CA) and Aguilar (D-CA), which would create a statewide community eligibility option.

Expanding Access to School Meals Act ([H.R. 3113](#)) introduced by Rep. Porter (D-CA), which would increase eligibility for free meals to 200 percent, expand direct certification, make eligibility retroactive to the beginning of the school year, and increase funding for community eligibility schools.

Three Pathways to Healthy School Meals for All



Technical Notes

Data in this report are collected from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and an annual survey of state child nutrition officials conducted by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC). For consistency, all USDA data used in this report are from the states' 90-day revisions of the monthly reports. The 90-day revisions are the final required reports from the states, but states have the option to change numbers at any time after that point.

Student Participation

The student participation data in each state are based on daily averages of the number of breakfasts and lunches served through the available program options on school days during the nine months from September through May. FRAC calculated the number of children reached in each state during each school year by dividing the total number of breakfasts and lunches served by each state's average number of serving days during the corresponding school year. The pandemic impacted which federal child nutrition programs schools operated to provide breakfasts and lunches, as well as program operations. The following bullets describe the data adjustments made to each school year to account for the impact of the pandemic on the available data.

- ▶ **During the 2018–2019 school year**, average daily participation is based on the total number of breakfasts and lunches served through the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and each state's average number of serving days in SBP and NSLP during the 2018–2019 school year.
- ▶ **During the 2019–2020 school year**, average daily participation is based on the total number of breakfasts and lunches served through SBP, NSLP, the Seamless Summer Option (SSO), and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and each state's average number of serving days in SBP and NSLP

during the 2018–2019 school year. While FRAC would normally use the service days from the corresponding year to determine the number of children served, disruptions to the number of traditional service days — and the transition to SFSP and SSO in many states — in those years would not provide a fair comparison. Using the 2018–2019 service days assumes that school schedules were consistent with pre-pandemic schedules. This approach was also applied to the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 school years.

- ▶ **During the 2020–2021 school year**, average daily participation is based on the total number of breakfasts and lunches served through SBP, NSLP, SSO, and SFSP, and each state's average number of serving days in SBP and NSLP during the 2018–2019 school year.
- ▶ **During the 2021–2022 school year**, average daily participation is based on the number of breakfasts and lunches served through SBP, NSLP, SSO, and each state's average number of serving days in SBP and NSLP during the 2018–2019 school year.
- ▶ **During the 2022–2023 school year**, average daily participation is based on the number of breakfasts and lunches served through SBP and NSLP and each state's average number of serving days in SBP and NSLP during the 2022–2023 school year. California and Maine reported to USDA that they served breakfasts and lunches through SSO in the 2022–2023 school year. Those numbers are included in their participation data because meals served through SSO are included in the free category of meals served in SBP and NSLP instead of being reported separately.

Breakfasts and lunches served through SSO have historically been reported in the free category of SBP or NSLP. During the pandemic, schools were



using SSO broadly through USDA waivers. In normal years, including the 2018–2019, 2019–2020 (prior to schools closing in response to the pandemic), and 2022–2023 school years, SSO participation during the school year is outside of the regular school day, and are “summer meals,” which includes meals served in September before the school year starts, during extended breaks at year-round schools, or unanticipated school closures.

Based on information from USDA, FRAC applies a formula (divide average daily participation by an attendance factor) to adjust numbers upwards to account for children who were absent from school on a particular day. FRAC uses an attendance factor of 0.927 to adjust the average daily participation numbers in breakfast and lunch for the 2018–2019, 2019–2020, 2020–2021, 2021–2022, and 2022–2023 school years.

SOURCE FOR QUOTES

The quotes from parents and community members were collected through a form on FRAC's website during the 2021–2022 school year.

Endnotes

- 1 The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education submitted this quote to FRAC in February 2024 in response to a school meals survey.
- 2 The eligibility threshold for school meals is adjusted annually.
- 3 In addition to schools, child nutrition waivers from USDA allowed public and private nonprofit organizations to offer free meals to all students.
- 4 If a student attended a community eligibility or a Provision 2 or 3 school, they were able to continue accessing no cost meals at school.
- 5 Schools could also use Provision 2 and 3 to offer meals to all students at no charge, but the vast majority of schools utilized community eligibility.
- 6 Families in the paid category pay the majority of the meal cost, however, the federal government provides a small subsidy for the meals through reimbursements.
- 7 High-need schools in all states can offer students meals at no cost if they participate in the Community Eligibility Provision. Schools can also use Provision 2 or 3 to offer free meals to all students.
- 8 The California Department of Education submitted this quote to FRAC in January 2024 in response to a school meals survey.
- 9 State child nutrition agencies were asked to note benefits of Healthy School Meals for All policies they observed in their states through a form sent to them by FRAC in 2023.

Appendix 1: Total Average Daily Participation in School Breakfast and Lunch in Healthy School Meals for All States, School Years 2018–2019¹ through 2022–2023²

State	Pre-Pandemic Operations			Partial-Year COVID Waivers			Full-Year COVID Waivers			Full-Year COVID Waivers			HSMFA Implementation		
	School Year 2018–2019			School Year 2019–2020 ³			School Year 2020–2021 ⁴			School Year 2021–2022 ⁵			School Year 2022–2023		
	Average Daily Participation in Breakfast	Average Daily Participation in Lunch	Breakfast to Lunch Participation Ratio	Average Daily Participation in Breakfast	Average Daily Participation in Lunch	Breakfast to Lunch Participation Ratio	Average Daily Participation in Breakfast	Average Daily Participation in Lunch	Breakfast to Lunch Participation Ratio	Average Daily Participation in Breakfast	Average Daily Participation in Lunch	Breakfast to Lunch Participation Ratio	Average Daily Participation in Breakfast	Average Daily Participation in Lunch	Breakfast to Lunch Participation Ratio
California	1,696,935	3,096,331	54.8	1,686,605	2,643,330	63.8	1,670,281	1,774,518	94.1	1,550,113	3,075,214	50.4	1,749,211	3,205,414	54.6
Maine	52,083	91,890	56.7	61,333	87,927	69.8	46,850	65,822	71.2	61,985	105,178	58.9	66,804	112,661	59.3
Massachusetts	213,128	510,703	41.7	195,238	404,654	48.2	224,790	307,519	73.1	237,991	571,647	41.6	265,363	592,896	44.8
Nevada	132,442	224,395	59.0	117,595	190,770	61.6	94,860	110,291	86.0	139,605	250,434	55.7	123,084	235,415	52.3
Vermont	25,223	44,115	57.2	30,651	43,052	71.2	29,272	38,541	76.0	32,779	51,267	63.9	35,255	54,704	64.4
Total	2,119,811	3,967,434	53.4	2,091,422	3,369,733	62.1	2,066,053	2,296,691	90.0	2,022,473	4,053,740	49.9	2,239,719	4,201,090	53.3

1 Average Daily Participation during the 2021–2022 school year includes participation in the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, and Seamless Summer Option.

2 Average Daily Participation during the 2022–2023 school year includes participation in the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, and Seamless Summer Option for September 2022 only.

3 With most schools closing in the spring of 2020 and providing meals at no charge at sites to families to take home through the pandemic waivers, lunch participation decreased in every state in the 2019–2020 school year

compared to the prior year. Being able to provide breakfast and lunch at the same time reduced the gap between school breakfast and lunch in all five states, and supported Maine and Vermont in providing breakfasts to more children.

4 With many schools closed or operating under hybrid models during much of the 2020–2021 school year and providing meals at no charge at sites to families to take home through the pandemic waivers, lunch participation dropped in every state compared to the two prior school years. Being able to provide breakfast and lunch at the same time shrunk the breakfast to

lunch ratio to 90:100, with Massachusetts and Vermont serving breakfast to more children than they did during the 2018–2019 school year (the last full school year prior to the pandemic).

5 Most schools returned to in-person learning during the 2021–2022 school year and were able to offer meals to all children at no charge through the pandemic waivers. With children returning to school, lunch participation increased dramatically in every state. Breakfast participation also increased in every state, but not at the same rate, and the gap between breakfast and lunch participation increased in all states compared to the 2020–2021 school year.

Appendix 2: Total Percentage Change in Average Daily Participation in School Breakfast and Lunch in Healthy School Meals for All States, School Years 2018–2019 and 2022–2023

State	Pre-Pandemic Operations		HSMFA Implementation		Percentage Change	
	School Year 2018–2019		School Year 2022–2023			
	Average Daily Participation in Breakfast	Average Daily Participation in Lunch	Average Daily Participation in Breakfast	Average Daily Participation in Lunch	Change in Breakfast Participation	Change in Lunch Participation
California	1,696,935	3,096,331	1,749,211	3,205,414	3%	4%
Maine	52,083	91,890	66,804	112,661	28%	23%
Massachusetts	213,128	510,703	265,363	592,896	25%	16%
Nevada	132,442	224,395	123,084	235,415	-7%	5%
Vermont	25,223	44,115	35,255	54,704	40%	24%
Total	2,119,811	3,967,434	2,239,719	4,201,090	6%	6%



Food Research & Action Center

1200 18th Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
202.986.2200 | www.frac.org

 @fractweets

 facebook.com/foodresearchandactioncenter

 @fracgram

 linkedin.com/company/food-research-and-action-center