

H.R. 7887 Would Ensure Stigma-free, Healthy Meals for All Children Pandemic Demonstrates Need for Universal Meals

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of families are struggling, some for the very first time, to put food on the table. Many more students now qualify for free and reduced-price lunch.¹ There are children who will not qualify for free meals at school, but with the economic volatility, their parents are finding it difficult to feed their children a healthy meal. And then there are the families that may move in and out of eligibility throughout the school year. Congress can help by passing H.R. 7887, the Pandemic Child Hunger Prevention Act but for it to pass, they must hear from parents and caregivers like you.

What is H.R. 7887, the Pandemic Child Hunger Prevention Act?

The bill, which was introduced by Congressman Bobby Scott of Virginia (current cosponsor list [found here](#)) and endorsed by more than 125 organizations, would provide free breakfast and free lunch to all students, regardless of their family's income or school day structure. This is often referred to as "universal meals."

Why Universal Meals?

Universal meals provide numerous benefits²:

- Ensures no child goes hungry during school hours;
- Eliminates the shame of receiving a free meal at school or not having the ability to pay a meal balance;
- Helps school food programs focus on feeding kids safely, rather than worrying about finances and processing applications; and
- Guarantees funds for school food programs that lost millions feeding hungry families during the beginning of the pandemic.
- Assures parents that students will receive free meals at school, even if their family income fluctuates in and out of typical eligibility requirements for free meals.

¹ USDA FNS National School Lunch Program Monthly Data (data as of June 10, 2020). <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/36slmonthly-7.pdf>. Accessed October 19, 2020.

² American Heart Association Policy Statement on School Nutrition; June 2020. <https://www.heart.org/-/media/files/about-us/policy-research/policy-positions/healthy-schools-and-childhood-obesity/school-foods-policy-statement-final-7-28-20.pdf?la=en>

Voices for Healthy Kids School Nutrition Policy Coalition Sample Fact Sheet

Why Now?

The pandemic has demonstrated just how important school meals are. Before COVID-19, 30 million children relied on school meals.³ As the pandemic continues, families need help feeding their kids, but school meal programs can't feed everyone without Congressional support.

How Can I Get Involved?

- **Contact your Representative** to express your support for the Pandemic Child Hunger Prevention Act. Make sure to tell them why it's important to you.
- **Submit an Op Ed** to a local newspaper (see our sample)
- **Share on social media** why you support universal meals. Use the hashtag #SchoolMealsForAll

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture; Food and Nutrition Service. National School Lunch Program: Participation and lunches served (data as of July 10, 2020). <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/slsu2019-2020.pdf>. Accessed July 22, 2020.