

Making School Meals for All an Illinois Reality

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Illinois Public Health Institute | Illinois Alliance to
Promote Opportunities for Health Coalition



Illinois Public Health Institute

- Our mission is to collaborate to advance health justice through equitable policy, systems, and institutional change
- We convene a multi-sector coalition of partners called the Illinois Alliance to Promote Opportunities for Health (IAPOH)



Healthy School Meals for All Kids Overview

School Meals Matter!

School Meals are Nourishing

School meals must meet federal nutrition standards. They contain **nutritious foods** like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat or nonfat milk

Free, Healthy School Meals Help Students

Giving all children access to free, healthy school meals has been shown to **improve their health, growth, development, mental health, and academic performance.**

There's an Access Gap

Approximately 419,180 children in Illinois experience food insecurity and **about 1 in 3 of them were not eligible for free or reduced-price school meal programs** due to outdated eligibility guidelines.

Free School Meals for All Supports Equity and Reduces Stigma

Black and Latine/x children are twice as likely to experience food insecurity as white children. Making free school meals available to all children **can reduce disparities in health and education outcomes** between groups. The stigma associated with taking a free or reduced- price meal can also be addressed.

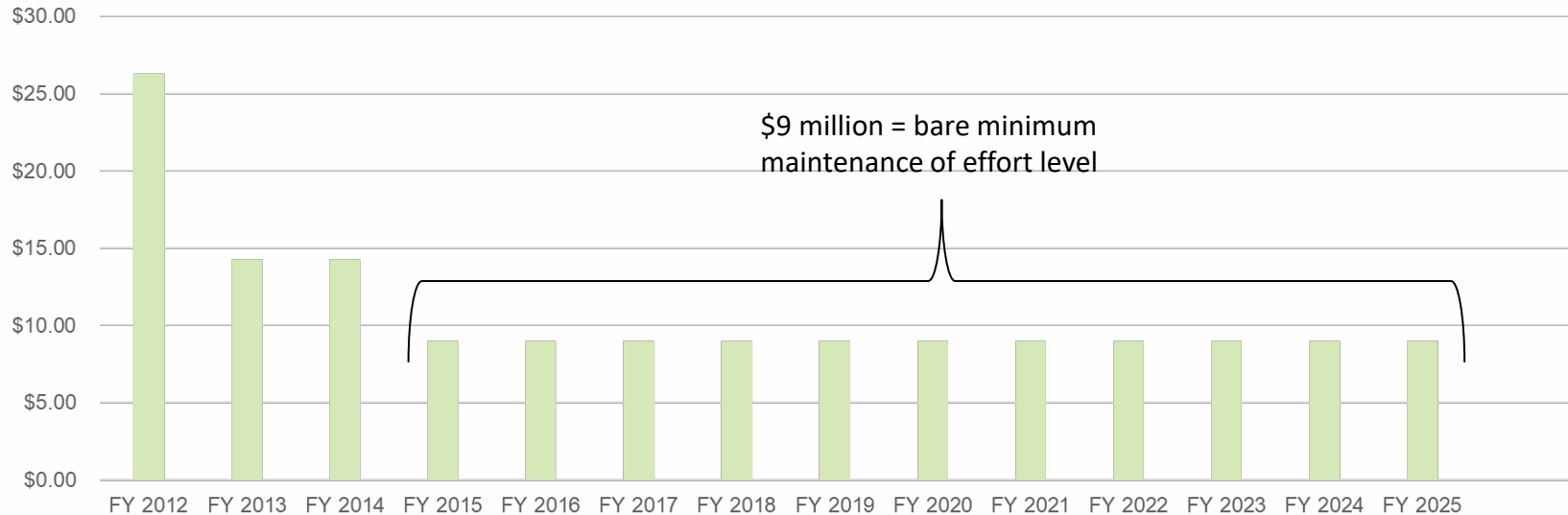
Illinois School Meals Background

- For too many students school meals are their main source of daily nourishment
- Federal waivers that kept students fed during the COVID-19 pandemic expired in June 2022
- Puts thousands of Illinois students at risk for hunger at school



Illinois' Investment in Free School Meals

Appropriation by Year in Millions



Community Eligibility Provision

- Allows schools to offer breakfast and lunch to all students for free
- Eliminates unpaid meal charges and minimizes stigma
- Reduces paperwork and streamlines meals services
- Threshold for eligibility changed from 40% → 25% ISP in 2023
- Schools with ISP above 62.5% receive full “free” reimbursement rate
- Schools with ISP between 25% and 62.5% have funding gap

From 2023 Testimony

A district before offering free school meals for all...

“Imagine what this looked like through the eyes of a six-year-old child”

- Students arriving at school hungry
- Teachers fill a cupboard in their own classrooms with snacks
- Notes that go home with children with how much they “owe” and how they may be identified in the lunch line
- Watching a student open a lunch box to only find one item: a bag of crushed potato chips

“

My district didn't used to provide free meals to all students and we saw kids arriving to school hungry with no breakfast available and teachers having to spend out of pocket to keep their classrooms stocked with snacks. Now that we've been able to participate in the Federal program that allows us to provide free meals to all, we've seen a big impact on our students and families, allowing working parents to stretch their dollars further, teachers to spend more time teaching, and kids not worried about what their friends will think if they take the free meal. I'm so happy all districts in Illinois will now have a chance to get the resources they need to offer this program to their families.

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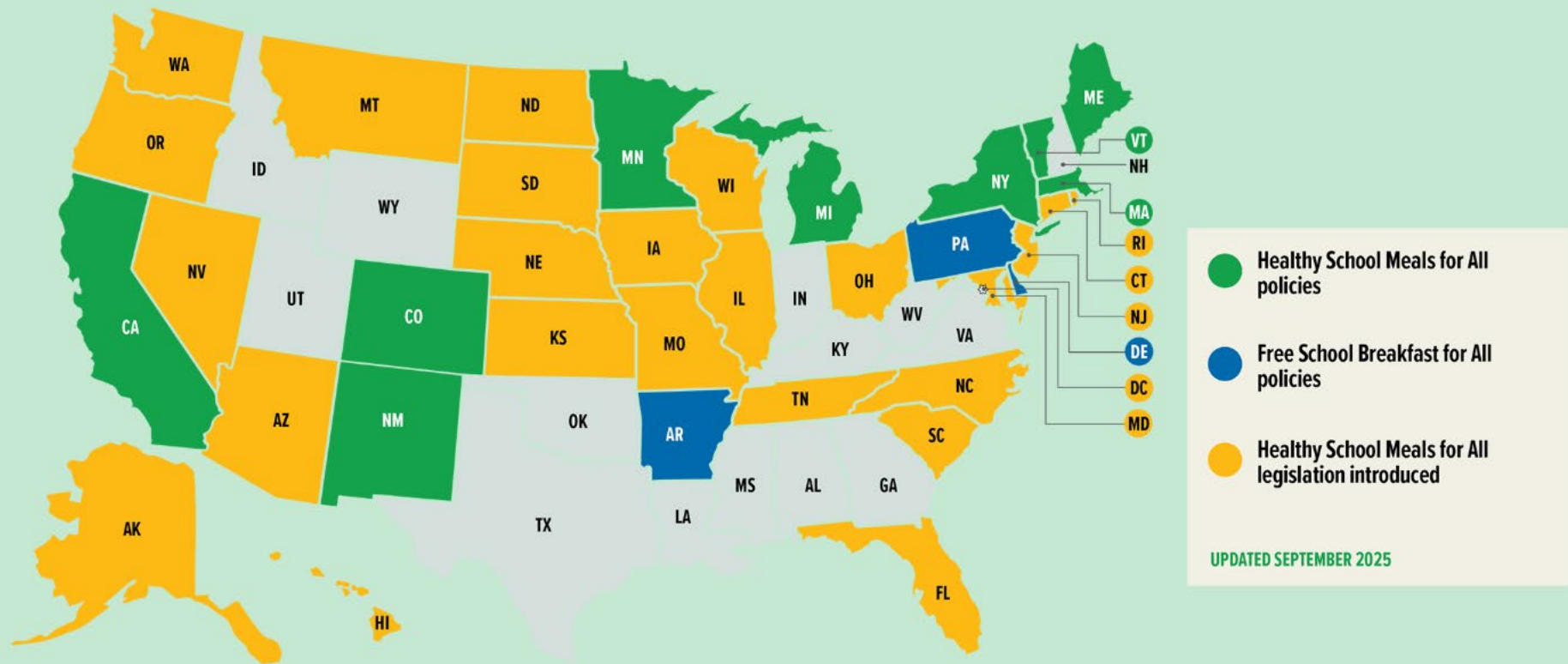
Sheri Peacock, retired Associate Superintendent of East Moline School District 37



The Campaign

healthyschoolmealsil.com/about

FRAC School Meals for All Policies Map



The Healthy School Meals for All Law

Public Act 103-0532- Healthy School Meals for All- established the framework to enable any Illinois school participating in the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs to **provide free breakfast and lunch to every student**, regardless of ability to pay

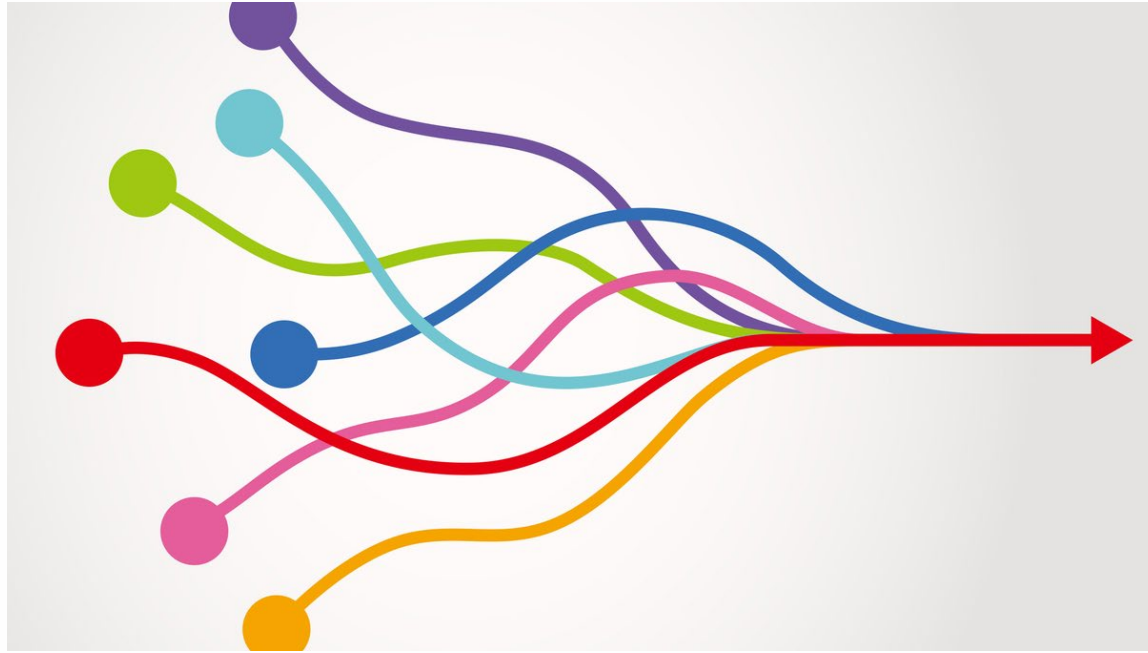


Appropriation Ask

**FY 2027 State Budget
appropriation request:
\$67 million**

Sen. Ellman & Rep. West are the
bill sponsors/champions





Join Us!

We need everyone's voice to get the appropriation this law needs

Our Coalition

- *Action for Healthy Kids*
- *Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago*
- *American Diabetes Association*
- *American Heart Association*
- *Bread for the World*
- *Chef Ann Foundation*
- *Chicago Food Policy Action Council*
- *Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI)*
- *Cook County Department of Public Health*
- *Feeding Illinois*
- *Greater Chicago Food Depository*
- *Healthy Schools Campaign*
- *Illinois Alliance to Promote Opportunities for Health*
- *Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA)*
- *Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics*
- *Illinois Education Association (IEA)*
- *Illinois Farm to School Network/Seven Generations Ahead*
- *Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT)*
- *Illinois Public Health Institute*
- *Illinois School Nutrition Association*
- *Illinois State Alliance of YMCAs*
- *Illinois Stewardship Alliance*
- *Legal Action Chicago*
- *Loyola Medicine*
- *Mission Readiness, Illinois*
- *POWER-PAC IL*

Available at
healthyschoolmealsil.com/about

Engagement Opportunities

- Testify or submit written testimony for the final Illinois State Board of Education budget hearing on October 21st
- Join our coalition
- Become a spokesperson
- Reach out!
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Innovation Hub



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

To Receive Credit for Today's Seminar

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