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## Anti-Lunch Shaming Act

### ACTION

The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) urges Congress to pass the Anti-Lunch Shaming Act of 2019, S. 1119, that would require schools to stop singling out children who either do not have money in their school lunch account or the ability to pay for their meal on the spot. This will end the practice of “lunch shaming” that embarrasses children who cannot pay for their meals. This legislation was introduced by Senator Tom Udall (D-NM).

### HISTORY

- More than three-quarters of school districts report some sort of school meal debt according to the School Nutrition Association. However school and school district policies vary greatly on how they address this issue of children with school meal “debt.”
- Some school districts will allow students to carry a small balance but that balance is frequently limited. Some districts will offer an alternative meal, such as a cheese sandwich, if there is a debt. Some districts allow younger students to charge meals but not older students.
- **Lunch shaming** happens when a lunch is taken away from a child because there is not enough money in their account (or in hand) to purchase a school lunch. Some school districts have gone so far as to stamp children’s hands or placed stickers or wristbands saying “I need lunch money,” that humiliates and embarrasses students.
- **No child** should be embarrassed by their parent’s financial status.
- **No child should be hungry at school.**

### BACKGROUND

- **Prohibits schools from taking any action that stigmatizes or shames students** who cannot pay their school meal fees.
- **Schools cannot dispose of food after it has been served to a child.**
- **Requires all communication** related to unpaid school meal fees be directed to the child’s parent or guardian.
- **Includes language** that encourages schools to adopt best practices that ensure eligible students have access to free and reduced-price school meals and increase efforts to reduce unpaid school meal fees.