

IMPROVING SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

- Whereas, Proper nutrition is imperative to the health, development and academic achievement of children, and the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 requires each Local Educational Agency participating in the National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast Program to have a wellness policy that promotes student well-being and ability to learn; and
- Whereas, In 2018 roughly 4.9 billion lunches are served annually to 30.4 million children that participate in the National School Lunch program, with approximately 74% of participants receiving free or reduced-price lunches, and almost half of those students consuming breakfast at school; and
- Whereas, Food insecurity, faced by 14 million children, is exacerbated by meal debt policies that shame and stigmatize, is linked to lower reading and math scores, falling behind peers academically and socially, and may lead to increased risk of behavioral issues, such as anxiety, hyperactivity, and aggression; and
- Whereas, Guidelines from the Center for Disease Control and US Department of Agriculture indicate that scheduling recess before lunch, and providing at least 20 minutes of seated time to eat a meal, leads to increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, decreased food waste, reduced discipline referrals, and increased academic performance; therefore, be it
- Resolved, That National PTA and its constituent associations support legislation and advocate for wellness policies, which include measurable goals and standards regarding child nutrition, that will ensure sufficient time for students to receive and consume a meal, and provide for recess opportunities; and be it further
- Resolved, That National PTA and its constituent associations oppose the practice of meal debt policies that shame or humiliate students, or prevent children from receiving a full meal equivalent to their peers; and be it further
- Resolved, That National PTA and its constituent associations be engaged in ongoing policy-making decisions to expand equitable access to school meals, including programs that increase meal availability.

Rationale for the Resolution:

Proper nutrition is the cornerstone of a child's health, well-being and balance. Students receive a significant portion of their daily nutritional needs from school, which for a majority includes breakfast and lunch. Unfortunately, in many cases, if a student arrives late for school, they do not have an opportunity to participate in breakfast after the bell, which can lead to lack of focus and attention. Often, students who accrue meal debt have been humiliated or stigmatized by certain actions referred to as "meal-shaming." These tactics can include taking a meal away from the student after they have been served, replacing the hot meal with a cold alternative, or putting a sticker on the student's shirt that says "I need lunch money."

A handful of states have already taken action to prohibit such meal-shaming practices, and more need to follow suit.

Due to competing demands for time during the school day, lunch periods have been shortened and students are rushed through their lunch period, often times throwing food away or bringing it home in their lunchbox, uneaten at the end of the day.

Adoption of this resolution will allow our voice to be raised to speak on behalf of meal availability for all students.