Support School Meal Programs and Child Nutrition

Become a Cosponsor of the Healthy Meal Time Act

_Endorsing Organizations:_ Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, American Heart Association, American Federation of Teachers, Bread for the World, Center for Science in the Public Interest, National Education Association, National PTA, School Nutrition Association, United Fresh Produce Association

Dear Colleague:

We encourage you to support school meal programs and child nutrition by cosponsoring the Healthy Meal Time Act (HR 5463).

The Healthy Meal Time Act would direct the Department of Agriculture, in coordination with the Department of Education, to provide best practices for scheduling lunch and recess to help ensure that students have adequate time to eat and reduce food waste. In order to obtain this information, the Department would commission a study of current practices in schools and review existing research.

Each school day, the National School Lunch Program serves over 32 million students and the School Breakfast Program serves over 12 million students. These meals are a vital source of healthy food for many children and positively impact student physical health and academic performance. For students to receive the full benefits of these programs, however, it is important that they have enough time to eat during an appropriate point in the day.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that students have a minimum of 20 minutes to eat lunch each day. Likewise, a study in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics found that lunch periods of at least 25 minutes were found to improve students’ nutritional intake and limit food waste. A study in the Journal of Child Nutrition and Management found that having recess before lunch results in students consuming more food, eating healthier food, and wasting less. It is unclear how many schools provide students adequate time for their meals, and no federal guidelines on this matter exist. Of note, having 20 or 25 minutes scheduled for lunch does not necessarily represent the time students have to eat their meals: this may be reduced by factors including time spent traveling to the cafeteria and waiting in line for food.

The Healthy Meal Time Act would help schools ensure their students are able to eat the nutritious meals they provide and reduce food waste. If you have questions or would like to become a cosponsor of this bill, please email Alex Payne (alex.payne@mail.house.gov) with Representative Schrier or Jessica Bowen (Jessica.bowen@mail.house.gov) with Representative Bonamici.

Sincerely,

**Kim Schrier, M.D.**  
Member of Congress

**Suzanne Bonamici**  
Chair, Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services