



December 15, 2023

The Honorable Josh Shapiro
Office of the Governor
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

Pennsylvania kids are better off today because of your leadership, and we want to thank you for being a champion for school breakfast in the Commonwealth.

We are a coalition of advocates who came together two years ago to successfully make the case for universal breakfast. We have been delighted by your appearances at schools and in cafeterias across the Commonwealth where 1.7 million Pennsylvania kids are offered breakfast and are ready to learn. Our coalition includes advocates for children, anti-hunger groups, child nutrition programs, school leadership organizations, education advocates, and more.

We are requesting that your 2024-25 budget include funding for both breakfast and lunch. Fifteen million children in the United States are already benefiting from universal breakfast and lunch. They are getting the nutrition they need and avoiding the stigma of food insecurity, which is more prevalent – and often more obvious – in rural areas. We want Pennsylvania students to avoid stigma and get the same quality nutrition that students are getting in Michigan, Minnesota, Maine, New Mexico, Vermont, Massachusetts, California, and Colorado. Feeding kids works.

Ensuring all kids have access to free meals while in school is popular with Pennsylvanians. In a survey conducted last month by respected Susquehanna Polling and Research, 8 in 10 Pennsylvanians – of all political, geographical, and demographic stripes – support expansion of school meals to include lunch. Eighty-eight percent were more likely to support expansion of school meals when told that one in eight kids in Pennsylvania are going hungry, and one in five kids in rural areas of the Commonwealth are going

hungry. Even when told the estimated cost to taxpayers, the overwhelming majority of Pennsylvania voters still want school meals for all kids. Respondents with children in school support universal school meals, but so do respondents without children in school. The Susquehanna poll oversampled for conservative voters in the Commonwealth, and 68% of respondents said they would be more likely to vote for a state lawmaker in Harrisburg who supports expansion of universal school meals to include lunch. School meals for all is a winning issue, and the right thing to do for kids, families, and a stronger Pennsylvania.

We know you must balance the needs of millions of Pennsylvanians. We also know that ALL kids in the Commonwealth would benefit from receiving nutritious meals in school, saving their families – many of whom are struggling – hundreds of dollars every month. The federal school meal programs are an important part of our nation’s anti-poverty, national security, and agricultural commodity infrastructure, but unfortunately, they don’t go far enough. If a family of four in Pennsylvania has a household income of more than \$39,000, the children in that family do not qualify to receive free meals paid for by the federal government. To stop the accumulation of lunch debt, eliminate stigma, and ensure that all kids have access to a healthy meal, we must fill the gap.

Your leadership has made universal school breakfast a reality for thousands of students in Pennsylvania. We hope you will join us and build on this tremendous achievement by advancing free, nutritious school meals for all students in your proposed budget.

We stand ready to provide any additional information that you might need, and we thank you for your leadership of our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Allies for Children
Avonworth School District
Better Together Food Access Task Force
Bristol Township School District
Carol H. Gilbert Consulting
Central Pennsylvania Food Bank
Child Hunger Outreach Partners / CHOP Out Hunger
Cumberland County Food System Alliance
Curwensville Area School District
Defender Association of Philadelphia
Derry Township School District
Feeding PA
Food For Friends Montco
Food Helpers/DBA Gr. Washington County Food Bank
Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

Healthy Adams County
Here For Us Advocacy Coalition
Hunger-Free Pennsylvania
Jersey Shore Area School District
Just Harvest
Juvenile Law Center
Lettuce Turnip the Beet Sustainability Collective
Lion of Judah Enterprises
Lower Merion School District
Manna on Main Street
MontCo Anti-Hunger Network
New Castle Area School district
New Hope-Solebury School District
North Penn School District
Nutritional Development Services
PA Family Support Alliance
Partnership for Better Health
Pennsylvania Farm to School Network
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
Philabundance
Pittsburgh Food Policy Council
Power Packs Project
Provident Charter School
Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA)
School Nutrition Association of Pennsylvania
Share Food Program Philadelphia
Share Our Strength
Sharing Excess North Penn
Shippensburg Produce and Outreach
South Middleton School District
State College Area School District
State Senator Lindsey Williams
The Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research at the University of Pennsylvania
The Food Trust
Union School District
Upper Dublin School District
Upper Moreland Township School District
West View United Methodist Church
West View Urban Farm

cc: Uri Monson, Secretary, Office of the Budget
Akbar Hossain, Secretary of Policy and Planning