

# School Meals for All

California is the first state in the nation to adopt school meals for all!

California has made history becoming the first state in the nation to transform school food by permanently providing free school meals to all K–12 public school students.

California State Senator and Center for Ecoliteracy Board Member Nancy Skinner, who introduced this proposal, said, “Free School Meals for All is based on a simple, compelling premise: universal schools, universal meals. I am grateful for the Center for Ecoliteracy’s critical advocacy and leadership to make California the first state to enact free school meals for all students. Just like textbooks, school meals will now be a universal part of every child’s school day — reducing stigma, hunger, and barriers to nutrition.”

As co-sponsors of the Free School Meals for All Act of 2021, The Center for Ecoliteracy, along with the California Association of Food Banks, NextGen California, TomKat Ranch, and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, build a broad coalition of [over 200 supporting organizations](#). Together, the School Meals for All coalition advocated for the following two policies that Governor Newsom signed into law through the 2021–22 California budget.

## **Free Breakfast and Lunch for All K-12 Students, Permanently**

This landmark investment provides \$650 million annually (beginning in the 2022–2023 school year) to nourish our children and support academic success. As the first state in the nation to provide free school meals to all public school students regardless of eligibility, California is paving the way for our country to make healthy school meals a part of every child’s educational day.

This policy is especially important for those who fall through the cracks in the existing system: eligible families concerned that submitting required paperwork could affect their immigration status, families of four who make more than \$48,470 per year and still go hungry because of the high cost of living in California, and eligible students who don’t participate because of the stigma that can be associated with free school meals. School Meals for All will reduce barriers to accessing school meals and will help ensure all students are ready to learn.

## **Funding to Increase Freshly Prepared Meals**

Also included in the state budget is \$150 million in one-time funding for training and equipment to serve freshly prepared meals at school. School kitchens are historically underfunded and often not equipped to prepare fresh food. This funding will provide the proper equipment and necessary training for school nutrition professionals to serve more freshly prepared and locally-grown food.

Schools play a critical role in children’s health and we are proud to be part of California’s leadership in elevating the importance of school meals. Through our [California Food for California Kids® initiative](#), we advance policy solutions that transform school food systems and how students learn about the food they eat. Looking forward, we are committed to supporting the successful implementation of School Meals for All, advocating for additional funding for the California Farm to School Grant Program, and lifting up California as a model for universal meals at the federal level.

Celebrate this win on social media. [Use this toolkit!](#)

## **Press Coverage**

### **[CNN: California will begin permanently offering free meals to all public school students this fall](#)**

California will permanently begin providing free school meals for students this fall in a move that many advocates are praising as a big step toward ending food insecurity.

## **[Good Morning America: California Pioneers New Free Lunch Program to Feed More Than 6M Students](#)**

All students regardless of their family's income will have the option to eat school meals for free.

## **[Associated Press: California Launches Largest Free School Lunch Program in US](#)**

California becomes the first state in the nation to permanently fund universal school meals for every public school student.

## **[CalMatters: Will California public schools continue free lunches for all?](#)**

Legislators want to spend \$650 million a year to continue a pandemic program for free meals for all California public school students.

## **[EdSource: Let's make free school meals for all permanent in California](#)**

Read school nutrition directors Stephanie Bruce of Palm Springs Unified and Trieste Huey of Fontana Unified in EdSource.

## **[Fresno Bee: One of the best ways to help Fresno County schoolkids learn? Feed them free school meals](#)**

Read Genoveva Islas, founder of Cultiva La Salud in Fresno Bee.

## **[EdSource: California moving to pioneer free meals for all students](#)**

East Bay senator's bill could make California the first state in the country to provide universal school meals.

## **Press Releases**

June 29, 2021: [California To Provide Free School Meals For All](#)

June 3, 2021: [California Poised to Be First in Nation to Permanently Provide Free School Meals to All Kids](#)

May 14, 2021: [Governor's May Budget Revise Embraces Universal School Meals](#)

May 4, 2021: [Free School Meals for All Considered in California State Budget](#)

April 21, 2021: [SB 364 Passes Senate Human Services Committee](#)

April 19, 2021: [School Meals For All Bill Would Nourish Students Beyond Pandemic](#)

April 7, 2021: [School Meals For All Passes Senate Education Committee with Unanimous Bi-Partisan Support](#)

April 6, 2021: [School Meal Program Directors, Teachers, Anti-Hunger and Health Advocates Join Calls for Free School Meals for All California Students](#)

February 10, 2021: [Bill Could Make California First in Nation to Provide School Meals to All Kids](#)

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