

June 15, 2023

By Email

Senator Michael J. Barrett
Assistant Majority Leader
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Room 109-D
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Senator Barrett,

We write to urge your support of including funds in the 2024 Budget for *Acts Relative to Universal School Meals* as outlined in House Bill 603 and Senate Bill 261 and to promote speedy passage. On our behalf, please urge your colleagues on the Joint Budget Conference Committee to include these funds in its compromise budget for FY24.

There are about 1000 students in the Lincoln Public Schools District, and of those approximately 600 students, both in the Lincoln School and in the Hanscom Air Force Base schools, have benefited from the federal universal lunch subsidy that ends on June 30. We need this legislation now.

Our district's food services have been essential for students whose supports have been disrupted by the pandemic and now are further strained by the soaring cost of food. The price of lunch in the district remained constant at \$3.00/day for a decade before the pandemic. Food costs and inflation will likely drive the daily lunch price to nearly \$5.00/day this fall.

Even for our moderate-income families, \$20-\$25 a week for one child is out of reach. Under the bill passed by the House, the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education would fill in the gaps for any school meal costs not covered by federal funds for qualifying low-income families.

We know that when children are food-insecure it is hard for them to succeed in the classroom, and universal school meals are critical to ensuring equity. When school lunches are available for free to all students, we remove barriers and support children nutritionally, emotionally, and educationally. To help our students recover from the trauma of the past two years and to ensure basic nutrition for all, we need your help. Please do everything you can to make school meals free for all our students.

Respectfully,

John MacLachlan, Chair
School Committee, Lincoln Public Schools