



## Proposition FF - Healthy School Meals for All Colorado Students

### Why Healthy School Meals for All?

- **Increase Participation in School Meals.** Supporters of this measure believe that more students will access school meals when available at no cost. Due to federal waivers, Colorado students had access to school meals at no cost for the 2020-21 and 21-22 school years and during this time more students ate school meals.
  - Districts saw an average of 20% increase in meal participation during this time period.
  - Districts have seen a decrease in participation with the end of these waivers.
- **Reduce stigma in School Meals.** Access to meals at no cost for all students has the potential to decrease or remove stigma sometimes associated with participating in the school meal program.
- **Reduce Hunger in Colorado Students.** Colorado families experience a higher cost of living than families in many states, yet the income eligibility guidelines are the same across the country. This currently leaves many families who do not qualify for free meals and struggle to afford to purchase school meals.
- **Impact Academic Success.** Access to healthy meals is correlated with a positive impact on a student's academic success.

### What will Proposition FF do for Colorado Students and School Meal Programs?

- Provide breakfast and lunch meals at no cost to all Colorado students (attending a school participating in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs)
- Increase funding for local procurement in school meal programs
- Provide funding support to Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) departments to be used for salaries or stipends for employees

### How is this Program Funded?

- Program to be funded by limiting Colorado state income tax deductions for high income earners (those earning more than \$300,000 annually)
- Deductions will be capped at \$12,000 for single filers and \$16,000 for joint filers

For more information: [www.yesonff.org](http://www.yesonff.org) and [Healthy Meals for All Toolkit](#)





## How Does the Program Work?

- Program to begin in 2023-24 school year.
- Schools and districts have option to opt-in to program (this may be done on an annual basis and is not a one-time opt-in opportunity)
- State of Colorado will fund the gap between current reimbursement (based on eligibility) and the federal free reimbursement rate for all eligible meals served
- If choosing to opt-in, federal reimbursement must be maximized
  - To maximize federal reimbursement, all eligible schools must participate in Community Eligibility Program (CEP) using current eligibility criteria
    - ISP (Identified Student Percentage or # of Students Directly Certified for Meal Eligibility) must be 40% or greater
  - Unlike traditional operation of CEP, under Proposition FF, the State of Colorado will fund (up to the free reimbursement rate) all eligible meals not served at the free rate in schools operating CEP
  - **Claiming Example**
    - **Traditional CEP Program (40% ISP, 1.6 Multiplier, 500 meals served)**
      - $40\% \text{ ISP} \times 1.6 = 64\%$  Free claiming percentage (and 36% paid claiming percentage)
      - $500 \text{ Meals Served} \times 64\% \text{ Free claiming percentage} = 320$  meals reimbursed at Free claiming rate
      - $500 \text{ Meals Served} \times 36\% \text{ paid claiming rate} = 180$  meals reimbursed at Paid claiming rate
      - Cost gap between Paid and Free rate for 180 meals funded by *School Food Authority via non-Federal Sources*
    - **CEP Operation using FF (40% ISP, 1.6 Multiplier, 500 meals served)**
      - $40\% \text{ ISP} \times 1.6 = 64\%$  Free claiming percentage (and 36% paid claiming percentage)
      - $500 \text{ Meals Served} \times 64\% \text{ Free claiming percentage} = 320$  meals reimbursed at Free claiming rate
      - $500 \text{ Meals Served} \times 36\% \text{ paid claiming rate} = 180$  meals reimbursed at Paid claiming rate
      - Cost gap between Paid and Free rate for 180 meals funded by *the State of Colorado*
- Districts opting into the program will operate in one of three ways:
  - If eligible, district may operate the CEP program district-wide
  - If some sites are eligible for CEP and others are not, the district will operate a combination of formats.
    - Free and reduced meal applications will continue to be collected at sites not operating CEP



- If no sites in a district qualify to operate CEP, the district may still opt-in to the program, collect free and reduced meal applications for eligibility and the state will fund all eligible meals served up to the free reimbursement rate.
- Once Medicaid data becomes available for use in determining Direct Certification eligibility, more sites will be eligible to operate CEP.
- House Bill 1202 directed a Working Group to create a new set of criteria for determining at-risk funding in Colorado. This eliminates the dependence on free and reduced meal applications for this purpose.
- Districts should anticipate an increase in participation similar to when federal waivers were put into place.
- Funding for local procurement and salary stipends begin in 2024-25 school year or after Medicaid data is available.

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