



Educate, empower, and advocate for the school nutrition professionals to advance the integrity, the accessibility, and quality of school nutrition programs

SNA-NC Legislative Update

July 20, 2026

Dear School Nutrition Colleagues,

Fantastic news for all School Nutrition employees in North Carolina: the NC General Assembly enacted a 2026-27 Budget with \$1,750 one-time bonuses for all School Nutrition employees! It is a total of \$17 Million non-recurring appropriation for both locally and federally-funded school nutrition and custodial personnel. This is truly historic for School Nutrition (SN) employees.

In the past, our General Assembly has funded supplemental compensation to make up for lost revenue, after hurricanes (\$16 Million in 2024), during and after the COVID pandemic (\$85 Million), and other natural disasters; however, this is the first new state investment to help pay our employees in state dollars without a recent natural disaster. Now, more than ever, please make a point to thank both of your state legislators (Representative and Senator). If you need to find your current legislators, please use the [“Find Your Legislators” link](#) on the NC General Assembly website and write your “thank you letter” TODAY.

Your School Nutrition Association of North Carolina leadership, including your Public Policy and Legislative Committee, has worked extremely hard this year and last year to achieve this significant victory for all SNA-NC members. Notably, this new one-time bonus would not have happened without all our members reaching out to their legislators; and it definitely would not have happened without SNA-NC’s extensive advocacy efforts. Your membership dues are literally giving you a return on your investment.

Other victories and SN provisions include the following:

- 1) \$2.5 Million (non-recurring) for DPI to distribute reimbursements to eligible elementary schools that serve fresh fruits, vegetables, and other local agricultural products to children through the NC Farm to School Program.
- 2) A new state law prohibiting “alternate schools meals based on student pay status.” All NC public schools must offer the same meal selections to all students regardless of student pay status for the nutrition program. “Pay status” includes students receiving free or reduced-price lunch or students that have unpaid meal debt.
- 3) The state’s Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Meal Incentive Program is now codified in state statute under NC General Statute s. 115C-264.6 (see p. 118-119 of the [2026-27 NC Budget](#)). This state law sets forth the following pertinent provisions:
 - a. DPI develops the application by April 15 of each year.
 - b. Public school units can apply by June 1.
 - c. DPI determines which applicants are eligible by July 15.
 - d. State reimbursement equals the “difference between the federal free rate and the federal paid rate for the number of meals served at the participating schools equal



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to a 0.2 multiplier of the Identified Student Percentage (ISP) for the participating schools.”

- e. Participating schools shall have an innovative breakfast option available where students have access to breakfast and are allowed to consume breakfast in the classroom. See NC General Statute s. 115C-264.6(e).

4) \$5 Million state match for SUN Bucks to draw down \$60 million for summer food assistance.

5) Approximately \$5 Million in various SNAP investments are targeted at decreasing error rates and system improvements. However, the requested \$52 Million to help NC counties cover the increased SNAP administrative costs were not included in the new budget. For more information on these SNAP costs, please read this [July 10 NCHealth News article](#).

For more information on the 2026 Budget, please see DPI's Financial Business Services update under [“What's New” FY 2026-27 Budget](#), and this [July EdNC article](#) on the 2026-27 Budget.

Remember: please mark your calendar now to **vote by Tuesday November 3 Election Day 2026!** Do your research on all candidates in your NC House and NC Senate districts: all state legislative seats are up for election this year. You want to be sure that you are voting for the candidate that supports School Nutrition funding, especially maintaining the historic state investment in our 2026-27 compensation that we won this year!

Together, we will continue building on this historic momentum for the benefit of our students, staff, and school nutrition programs statewide. Best wishes for a successful 2026-27 School Year.

With appreciation,

Amy Stanley
Public Policy & Legislative Committee Chair
School Nutrition Association of North Carolina