



## The Healthy Meals Help Kids Learn Act

In June of 2022, Congress passed the bipartisan Keep Kids Fed Act that temporarily increased the federal reimbursement rate for schools to provide meals to students. This one-year rate increase expired on June 30, 2023. Since then, schools across the country have [expressed concern](#) about being able to provide students with nutritious meals, given rising costs and stretched budgets.

### **The Healthy Meals Help Kids Learn Act:**

The Healthy Meals Help Kids Learn Act would permanently increase the federal reimbursement level for all free, reduced-price, and paid-rate school meals by 45 cents for every lunch served and 28 cents for every breakfast served, with a yearly adjustment.

Increasing reimbursement rates will help schools provide students with quality, nutritious meals. [Research shows](#) school meals are the healthiest meals in a day for most kids and are a vital tool in reducing childhood hunger and [improving learning outcomes](#). The Healthy Meals Help Kids Learn Act ensures that schools have the needed resources to provide this lifeline to students so they can thrive.

### **Background:**

The majority of federal funding in child nutrition programs takes the form of per-meal cash reimbursements. These rates are specified in the programs' authorizing laws with an annual inflation adjustment. Although all (including full-price) meals/snacks served by participating providers are subsidized, those served for free or at a reduced price to lower-income children earn higher rates.

### **Current Reimbursement Rates:**

Since the one-year increase included in the Keep Kids Fed Act expired in June 2023, schools are now receiving lower reimbursement rates for the 2023-24 school year than they did for 2022-23, which is especially troublesome, **as food prices increased by 9.9% in 2022.**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-price-outlook/summary-findings/#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20food%20prices%20increased,than%20their%20historical%20average%20rate>

For the 2022-23 school year, after increases from the Keep Kids Fed Act, schools in the contiguous 48 states starting reimbursement rates were:

	<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>Free</b>	\$2.26	\$4.33
<b>Reduced Price</b>	\$1.96	\$3.93
<b>Paid</b>	\$0.50	\$0.77

For the 2023-24 school year, **without** increases from the Keep Kids Fed Act, schools in the contiguous 48 states starting reimbursement rates were<sup>2</sup>:

	<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>Free</b>	\$2.28	\$4.25
<b>Reduced Price</b>	\$1.98	\$3.85
<b>Paid</b>	\$0.38	\$0.40

### **Healthy Meals Help Kids Learn Act Endorsers**

School Nutrition Association, Food Research & Action Center, American Heart Association, MAZON, Bread for the World, First Focus Campaign for Children, Save the Children, Project Bread, Urban School Food Alliance, American Commodity Distribution Association, School Superintendents Association, Association of School Business Officials International, Center for Science in the Public Interest, Mayors Alliance to End Childhood Hunger, Flashfood, Chop Chop Family, FoodCorps, Roadrunner Food Bank, NM Voices for Children, NM Appleseed

For more information about the legislation, please email [Mariah Baker@heinrich.senate.gov](mailto:Mariah_Baker@heinrich.senate.gov).

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2023-07-07/pdf/2023-14313.pdf>