

REAP FOOD GROUP

3241 Garver Green #240, Madison, WI 53704

Wisconsin State Legislature
Joint Committee on Finance

Re: Support for Healthy Schools Meals for All - 2023-2025 Biennial Budget

Representative Born and Senator Marklein and members of the committee,

REAP Food Group writes in support of the inclusion of Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids in the 2023-2025 biennial budget. This plan will ensure that all Wisconsin students have access to school breakfast and lunch at no cost.

For 25 years, REAP Food Group has been actively building an equitable food system by supporting healthy school meals and connecting local farms to new and existing markets. For 15 years we have been actively partnering with the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) to provide a healthy and locally sourced snack for elementary school students. We have heard from numerous families, teachers, and administrators about the importance of healthy snacks in the classroom. We are currently working with MMSD connecting them to more local farms to provide healthy ingredients for all meals. While free meals for all students will reduce hunger, adopting this plan will ensure that all our students have the nutrition they need to learn and thrive regardless of family income.

We are also advocating for the 10 cent meal reimbursement for purchasing from local farms. This \$2.75 million allocated for local food purchasing will positively impact local farms and economies, many of which are in rural communities. Other states such as Michigan have implemented a 10 cent meal reimbursement with great success. If passed, REAP is committed to connecting our vast network of local farms to this economic benefit as well helping farmers market their products to local school districts through our new wholesale purchasing platform (www.wholesaleready.org) and Farm Fresh Atlas website (www.farmfreshatlas.org).

We strongly support Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids, which would ensure access to nutritious meals, support the school academic environment, help address child hunger, and provide an economic boost for local farms. Thank you for considering our comments. If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact me at (608) 310-7836 or philk@reapfoodgroup.org.

Sincerely,

Philip Kauth
Executive Director
REAP Food Group

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