

UNIVERSAL SCHOOL MEALS

Are Essential for Advancing Racial Equity

Institutional racism disproportionately denies Black, Latinx, and Indigenous children access to healthy food at home and in their communities.



Black and Latinx children are twice as likely to live in households without enough to eat as white children¹



Nearly 1 in 4 Black children and 1 in 5 Latinx children lack access to healthy food²

To advance racial equity and food justice, Congress must extend universal school meals now.



Providing healthy school meals for all will reduce longstanding and widening racial disparities in nutrition, health, and education. Research shows access to universal school meals:

Boosts students' attendance

Improves academic performance

Improves health outcomes

Eliminates stigma and lunch-shaming

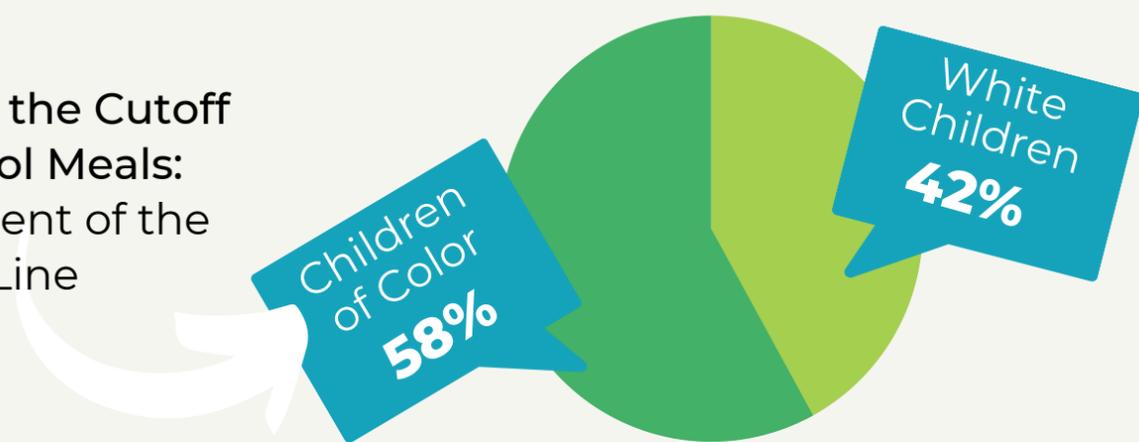
Reduces **behavior-related suspensions**, which feed into the Cradle to Prison Pipeline™ that disproportionately funnels Black and brown youth from the schoolhouse to the jailhouse.



If Congress fails to extend universal school meals, children of color will be hit the hardest.

Nearly 60 percent of children just above the cutoff for free school meals are children of color.³

Children Above the Cutoff for Free School Meals: Up to 200 Percent of the Poverty Line



10.8 million children live in households with incomes between 130 percent and 200 percent of the federal poverty line, earning too much to qualify for free school meals but too little to get by⁴



58 percent are children of color

As many as 5.5 million hungry children will not qualify for free meals if their school does not continue offering universal meals after the pandemic⁵

Congress can—and must—ensure no child is left behind without the nutritious food they need to grow, learn, and thrive.

1. Coleman-Jensen, Alisa et al. 2020. "Household Food Security in the United States in 2019 Statistical Supplement," Table S-3. United States Department of Agriculture. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/99289/ap-084.pdf?v=8474.5>.

2. Id at 1

3. U.S. Census Bureau. 2015. "American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates," Table POV-01. Based on latest available Census data for households with income below 130, 185, and 200 percent of poverty in 2014. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pov/pov-01.2014.html>.

4. Id at 3

5. Id at 1