



Testimony in Support
H7337- An Act Relating to Education – Federal Aid
May 7, 2024

The Latino Policy Institute is writing to express our strong support for H7337 regarding mandatory school breakfast and lunch programs. As an organization dedicated to advancing policies that promote the well-being of Latino communities in Rhode Island, we believe that ensuring all students have access to nutritious meals at school is crucial for their health, academic success, and overall development.

Access to nutritious meals is fundamental to a child's ability to learn and thrive in the classroom. Research consistently demonstrates that students who have regular access to healthy meals perform better academically, exhibit improved behavior, and are more likely to maintain a healthy weight. By providing free breakfast and type A lunches to all students, regardless of their family's financial circumstances, we can help mitigate educational disparities and create a more equitable learning environment for all students.

Moreover, the issue of food insecurity disproportionately affects communities of color, including Latino families, in Rhode Island and across the nation. Data from RI KIDS Count reveals that a significant percentage of households with children living in poverty experience food insecurity, highlighting the urgent need to address this issue. In 2022, 42.3% of U.S. households with children living in poverty experienced food insecurity. Furthermore, in 2023, 38% of households with children in Rhode Island reported being food insecure, compared to 29% of all households. These statistics underscore the pressing need to address food insecurity, particularly among vulnerable populations such as children living in poverty.

Implementing mandatory school breakfast and lunch programs statewide will not only help alleviate food insecurity among our youth but also contribute to their overall health and well-being. No child should ever have to worry about where their next meal will come from. By expanding access to free breakfast and lunch programs, we can help ensure that every child has access to the nutrition they need to grow and thrive.

We also commend the provision in the bill for the state to provide a per breakfast subsidy to school districts, which will help offset the costs associated with providing nutritious meals to students. This demonstrates a commitment to supporting our schools and ensuring that they have the resources necessary to meet the needs of all students.

We urge the members of the committee to support this important bill that requires free breakfast and lunches to be provided for all elementary and secondary students attending public schools. By offering financial support to school districts, we can help ensure that every child in Rhode Island has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

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