



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT AFL-CIO

To: Senate Finance Committee

From: Frank Flynn

Date: May 7, 2024

RE: Testimony in **Support of HB 7337** (Representative Sanchez et al.)

Universal School Breakfast and Lunch

On behalf of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals we strongly support *H 7337* sponsored by *Representative Sanchez*. These bills would require all Rhode Island public schools to make breakfasts and lunches available to all students free of charge.

It is our belief that a healthy well-balanced diet is a fundamental element of student success. We also believe that student hunger contributes to student absenteeism, poor academic performance, social and emotional stress, and disruptive behavior. It is our contention that food insecurity and improper nutrition exists across the entire economic spectrum and is not limited to students living in poverty.

Requiring districts to make breakfast and lunch available to all students during the school day will be beneficial for many reasons. First, all school meals would be subject to USDA health and nutrition standards. Second, this would eliminate the stigma sometimes attached to children receiving free and reduced lunches. Additionally, this would eliminate the "lunch shaming" which sometimes occurs when a child is unable to pay for their meal. This would also ensure that students have access to at least two healthy meals every day that school is in session. Finally, this would assist in fighting the nationwide epidemic of childhood obesity.

The RIFTHP *supports* H 7337 Universal School Breakfast and Lunch legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

356 SMITH STREET PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02908-3761 (401) 273-9800 FAX (401) 331-8815

• Francis J. Flynn, President • Bonnie Horta, Executive Assistant • Colleen A. Callahan, Director of Professional Issues •
• Michael J. Mullane, Field Representative • James A. Parisi, Field Representative •
• Christopher Lambert, Field Representative • Maria Manzi, Administrative Assistant •