

**MINNESOTA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
POLICY RESOLUTION**

Approved by email vote 10/20/2020

Universal School Meals

WHEREAS, millions of Americans live in households that struggle against hunger and in Minnesota 13.7 percent of children live in food-insecure households¹ and that number has likely increased significantly as families have lost jobs and wages due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, hunger has been shown to reduce academic achievement as children experiencing hunger are more likely to have repeated a grade, received special education services, or received mental health counseling, than low-income children who do not experience hunger;² and

WHEREAS, hunger creates barriers to learning as children experiencing hunger are more likely to be hyperactive, absent, and tardy, in addition to having behavioral and attention problems more often than other children,³ and

WHEREAS, the National School Lunch Program and the National School Breakfast Program play an important role in reducing childhood hunger by providing a nutritious breakfast and lunch every school day; and

WHEREAS, school meals support struggling families trying to stretch their limited resources and provide children with a significant portion of the daily nutrition they need to be healthy; and

WHEREAS, school breakfast and lunch provide students the nutrition they need in order to learn and have success throughout the school day; and

WHEREAS, the National School Lunch Programs work hand-in-hand with other federal nutrition programs such as the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (afterschool snacks and meals) and the Summer Food Service Program to create a nutritional safety net for low-income children throughout the year.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Minnesota Public Health Association:

1. Supports state and federal policies that seek to protect, strengthen, and expand access to the National School Lunch Program, the National School Breakfast Program, the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (afterschool snacks and meals) and the Summer Food Service Program.
2. Encourages work at the school-district, state and federal levels to reduce barriers to participation in the programs; to eliminate stigma associated with program participation; to implement innovative models that improve program participation such as breakfast in the classroom and “grab and go” breakfast stations and to enhance the nutritional quality of food served.

3. Stands in support of providing free and nutritious meals to every student that needs one, regardless of income eligibility, so that all students have the nutrition they need to learn and grow.

¹ Food Research and Action Center analysis of 2014-2016 Current Population Survey-Food Security Supplement (CPS-FSS) data.

² Kleinman, R. E., Murphy, J. M., Little, M., Pagano, M., Wehler, C. A., Regal, K., & Jellinek, M. S. (1998). Hunger in Children in the United States: Potential Behavioral and Emotional Correlates. *Pediatrics*, 101(1),E3.

³ Murphy, J. M., Wehler, C. A., Pagano, M. E., Little, M., Kleinman, R. F., & Jellinek, M. S. (1998). Relationship Between Hunger and Psychosocial Functioning in Low-Income American Children. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 37, 163-170.