



**American
Heart
Association.**

March 24, 2026

The Honorable Joseph McNamara
House Committee on Education
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

SUBJECT: Support for House Bill 8129

Dear Chair McNamara and Members of the Committee:

The American Heart Association would like to voice support for H. 8129, AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- FEDERAL AID, by Rep. Caldwell, and we thank the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony. This legislation would establish guidelines for “meal service collection providers” and set a cap on transaction fees for school meals. It would also ensure there is at least one no-fee payment method available for parents, guardians, or students.

As high food prices continue to take a toll on low- and middle-income families in Rhode Island, school meals are an important source of nutrition and a safeguard against chronic food insecurity. Transaction fees for school meals, though small in isolation, can add up to create barriers for already financially stressed families.

It is our hope that H. 8129 will be a stepping stone on the path to a future Healthy School Meals for All (Universal Free School Meals) policy. School meals are an integral part of the school day and a contributor to student success, and should be no different than textbooks, technology, transportation, access to school nurses, and other services provided to all students in public schools without cost.

Please recommend passage of H. 8129 – and continue to reduce barriers and increase access to school meals for students so they can learn and thrive. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Megan Tucker
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American Heart Association
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