

Hello everyone, my name is Brissia Rodriguez Reyes, I am a junior at Classical High School and I am a project leader for Young Voices. I am here today in support of bill number H7400. This bill has been one of the most important things to me ever since I joined Young Voices. When I learned about the food insecurity happening in our state and how so many of my peers and myself were harmed by the lack of healthy meals in schools, and the lack of access, I realized that this bill could be a huge change for our community.

When I first came to this country, I had trouble eating the food I was served in my cafeteria. I'd become so used to the local fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins from my homeland. Every time I ate in the cafeteria, I would become quite ill and would need to take many forms of medicine. Because of this experience, I no longer eat my school lunch; I either bring a little snack from home, eat at home, or eat at other restaurants around my school. I am fortunate enough to have food from home that I can bring and enough money to buy food whenever I want, but sadly, I know many of my peers don't. When it comes to kids, myself included, not eating enough food at lunchtime impacts my capacity to retain knowledge during class. This bill is so important because it could prevent other kids from spending time at school hungry and unable to learn, like I have been whenever I couldn't bring my own food.

I don't want this experience to happen to other people, but unfortunately, it does. This is why I helped co-create a survey alongside the RI Farm to School Network on school lunches. We found that out of the 150 students we surveyed on their satisfaction with school meals on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being the worst and 4 being the best, 63% of students answered 1-2. This comes to show how school meals are no longer what kids look forward to anymore. Kids want good, healthy meals, and we need to give them what they deserve.