



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

To: House Finance Committee  
From: Jeremy Sencer, Field Representative  
Date: April 28, 2026  
Re: Healthy School Meals for All  
Testimony in Support of 2026-H 7793 (Representative Caldwell, et. al.)

On behalf of RIFTHP, I submit testimony in support of H-7793, legislation that protects students by ensuring access to free, healthy school meals for all children in Rhode Island Public Schools.

Student hunger remains a significant barrier to learning. When students do not have consistent access to nutritious meals, it affects their ability to concentrate, participate in class, and succeed academically. Schools are often the most reliable source of daily nutrition for many students, making access to school meals essential for both health and educational outcomes.

H-7793 establishes a phased-in statewide program to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students, while maximizing the use of available federal funding to offset costs. By removing barriers to participation and ensuring all students can access meals without stigma or cost, the bill supports both equity and efficiency in school nutrition programs.

From the perspective of educators and school staff, students who are well-nourished are better prepared to learn, engage, and succeed. Universal school meals reduce administrative burdens, increase participation, and help create a more inclusive and supportive school environment.

This is a practical and proven investment in student health, academic success, and equity across Rhode Island.

**For these reasons, RIFTHP urges the Committee to support H-7793.**

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