



**Testimony in Support**  
**An Act Relating to Education - Federal Aid**  
**May 19, 2026**

The Latino Policy Institute respectfully submits testimony in support of S2663, legislation that would establish a phased-in statewide “Healthy School Meals for All” program to provide universal free breakfast and lunch to Rhode Island public school students.

Access to healthy and nutritious meals is essential to student learning, well-being, and long-term success. Yet too many Rhode Island families continue to experience food insecurity and economic strain, particularly working-class families and communities already facing barriers to opportunity. When students are hungry, it directly impacts concentration, attendance, classroom engagement, behavior, and academic performance. Universal school meals help ensure students can fully participate in learning environments without the burden or stigma often associated with income-based meal eligibility programs.

The Latino Policy Institute supports this legislation because it recognizes that educational equity includes meeting students’ basic needs. For many children, school meals are not supplemental support; they are a critical source of daily nutrition. Providing universal access helps reduce stress for families facing rising housing, food, transportation, and healthcare costs while creating a more inclusive environment for students across all communities.

We also appreciate the bill’s emphasis on improving meal quality and encouraging culturally relevant meal options that reflect the diversity of Rhode Island’s student population. Students and families should feel seen and reflected in school nutrition programs, and culturally responsive meal planning can help increase participation and strengthen trust between schools and communities.

Additionally, S2663 takes a practical and fiscally responsible approach by encouraging school districts to maximize available federal funding opportunities, including participation in federal reimbursement programs designed to offset costs to districts and the state. The phased implementation structure also allows Rhode Island to responsibly expand access over time while building district capacity for long-term success.

At its core, S2663 is an investment in student health, educational opportunity, and family stability. Ensuring that every child has access to healthy meals during the school day is a commonsense policy that supports stronger outcomes for students and communities across Rhode Island.

For these reasons, the Latino Policy Institute respectfully urges the Senate Finance Committee to support passage of S2663.

Thank you for your consideration.

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