



How To Talk With Your Lawmakers About CEP

Now that you've learned about the [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\)](#) and how it works, here are some suggestions for effectively advocating for CEP with lawmakers.

KNOW THE LOCAL IMPACT

Lawmakers must understand how CEP impacts their constituents so they can make informed decisions. [Find out](#) whether your school district participates in CEP or if your area could benefit from it. Whether through improved student test scores, reduced food insecurity, or increased school meal participation, tie your message directly to the impact of CEP in your community. **Try these talking points:**

- **CEP impacts state policies.** In states with a School Meals for All (SMFA) policy, CEP often makes providing those school meals financially feasible, as [many states use CEP as a funding source](#) for their school meals legislation. Cutting CEP (or reducing eligibility) would increase state financial burdens and disrupt access to nourishing school meals for [millions of students](#) who need them.
- **Access to school meals improves students' nutrition and health.** CEP is linked to a nearly [5% reduction in food insecurity](#) in households with children. Research shows that school meals, such as those provided through CEP, [are the most nutritious meals](#) that American children receive.
- **CEP improves academic outcomes and student behavior.** Research suggests that CEP adoption is associated with [higher math test scores](#) and [attendance rates](#). A study also found that students attending CEP schools are [more likely to advance beyond tenth grade](#). School meals, such as the breakfast provided under CEP, benefit students physically and emotionally, improving [classroom behavior](#).
- **CEP increases participation** in school meal programs and the number of students who experience the benefits of school meals. A USDA Impact Study identified a [6.8% increase](#) in NSLP participation and a 12% increase in School Breakfast Program participation.

HIGHLIGHT THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Communicate the positive ripple effect that protecting CEP can have. Highlight how CEP isn't just about students and school meals; it's about strengthening communities and economies. More children receiving school meals results in: reduced costs, fewer families struggling with food insecurity, and economic benefits for entire communities. **Try these talking points:**

- **School meals reduce fiscal spending**, and the economic benefits far outweigh their cost. Studies have found that school meals' nutritional benefits and impact could [save billions in long-term health-related costs](#).
- **CEP reduces the cost of groceries and combats inflation.** A study showed that families with school-aged children spend less on groceries when schools implement CEP. This "demand shock" resulted in 2.5% lower grocery prices across local stores, with a median [4.5% reduction in grocery costs](#) (an inflation-reducing effect), benefiting households *with and without* children.
- **CEP lowers costs for schools.** CEP increases participation and reduces costs of school meals by [\\$0.67 per lunch and \\$0.58 per breakfast](#), which can significantly enhance a district's budget and the quality of school meals.
- **CEP provides economic relief for families.** When students have access to school meals, families, especially low-income households, benefit from reduced monthly food expenses. A study found that households with children [save as much as \\$468 per year](#) or 19% in food purchases in areas with CEP.