



**North Smithfield
Public Schools**
A community dedicated to excellence

School Committee

James J. Lombardi III, Esq., CPA, Chair

Jean B. Meo, Vice-Chair

William J. Connell, Esq., Secretary

Margaret Votta

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North Smithfield School Committee Resolution
Healthy School Meals for All/Universal Free School Meals

WHEREAS, Providing healthy school meals for all students without cost was an extremely successful federal program enacted during the pandemic. Federal funding has expired, and now children who depended on it are going hungry again.

WHEREAS, States are stepping up to fill in the gap and ensure that all children, regardless of family income, can obtain healthy meals throughout the year and have the best chance to learn and thrive.

WHEREAS, Children and teens cannot learn on an empty stomach. There are many students that need a nutritious breakfast and lunch at school who do not qualify for free or reduced-price school meals.

WHEREAS, Food insecurity is at an all-time high in Rhode Island. According to the RI Community Food Bank, nearly one in three households in our state struggle to afford adequate food. The RI Life Index identified 38 percent of households with children as food insecure in 2023.

WHEREAS, The current policy for school meals, whereby some children are expected to pay while others receive their meals for free, creates stigma and shame for students that rely on school meals for their basic needs, and serves as a barrier for those students who are not eligible but are still experiencing food insecurity.

WHEREAS, Providing healthy school meals for all students combats child-hunger and food insecurity, promotes good nutrition, supports student well-being, improves learning outcomes, decreases stigma for children from low-income families, strengthens school budgets, ends the problem of unpaid school meal debt, and eases the administrative burden for schools.

WHEREAS, Universal school meals incentivize greater participation in the school meals program and allow schools to better invest in equipment, staff training, and initiatives such as farm-to-school that focus on scratch cooking.

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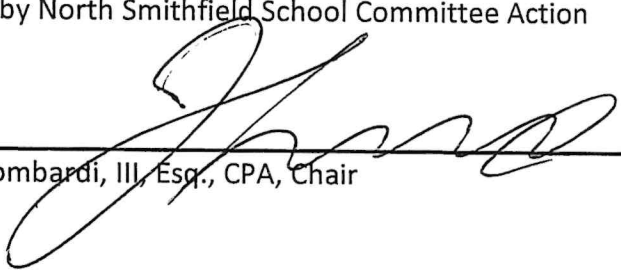
WHEREAS, School meals are an integral part of the school day and a contributor to student success, and should be no different than textbooks, technology, transportation, access to school nurses, and other services provided to all students without cost.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the North Smithfield School Committee respectfully requests the Rhode Island General Assembly pass Healthy School Meals for All legislation and include funding in the state budget to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students, regardless of their household income, as part of the school day so they can learn and thrive.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Honorable Daniel J. McKee, Governor of the State of Rhode Island, the Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi, Speaker of the Rhode Island House of Representatives, the Honorable Dominick J. Ruggiero, President of the Rhode Island Senate, and the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education.

WHERETO: The following bear witness:

Approved by North Smithfield School Committee Action



James J. Lombardi, III, Esq., CPA, Chair

3/19/24

Date