

Healthy School Meals for All

LUTHERAN OFFICE FOR PUBLIC POLICY



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Overview



- Lutheran Office of Public Policy
 - Defining key terms around hunger
 - Food insecurity across the U.S.
 - Wisconsin food insecurity
 - The Case for Universal Programs
 - COVID-19 and Hunger
 - Healthy School Meals for All
 - Action Steps
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Lutheran Office for Public Policy

- **An advocacy ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) as part of the Service and Justice Unit**
- Partnership between ELCA World Hunger and the six ELCA synods in Wisconsin with support from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan
- Priorities include: **Hunger, Human Trafficking, Care for God's Creation, Immigration Reform, and Juvenile Justice**
- Advocacy involves talking to parishes and communities through educational workshops, contacting and meeting with legislators on our priorities
- Advocacy also looks like becoming aware of problems in society, strategizing on how to fix them, and working within or creating coalitions around various issues

34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, **35** for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, **36** I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ **37** Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? **38** And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? **39** And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ **40** And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.’

Matthew 25: 34-40 (RSV)

Image from Kelly
Latimore Icons



Defining Terms

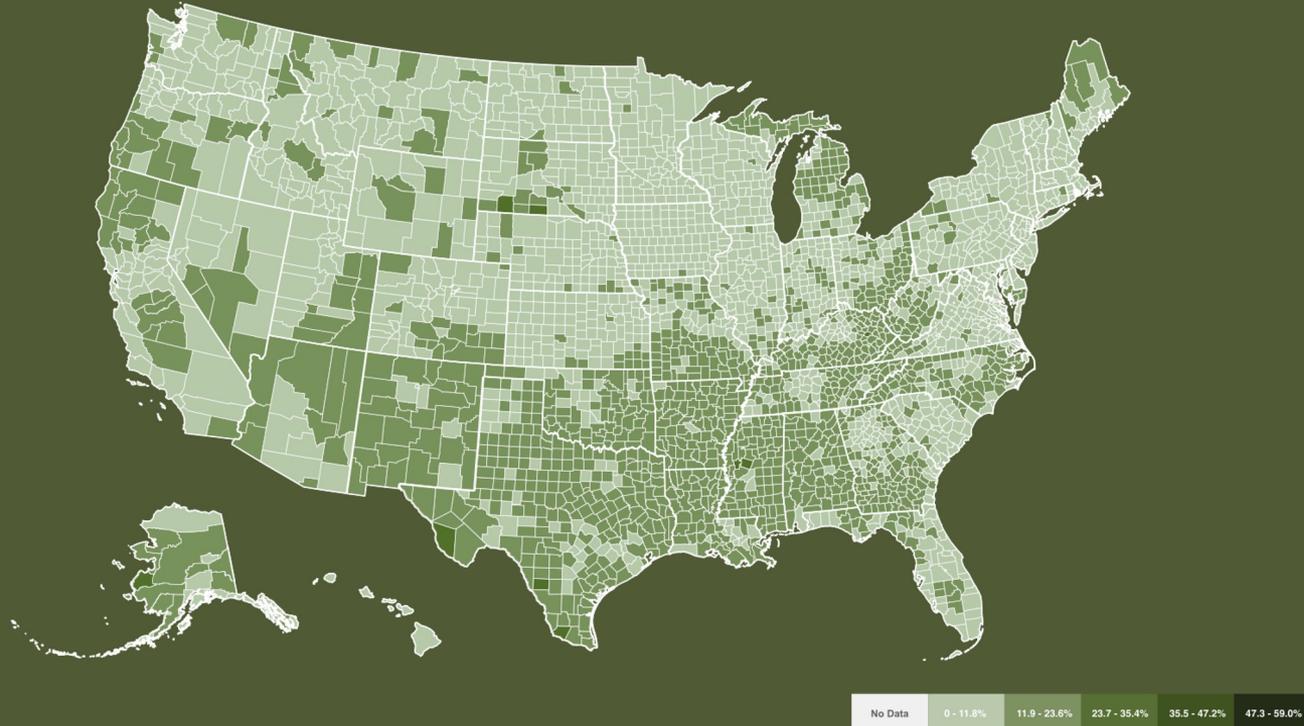
“**Food security** exists when **all people, at all times**, have physical and economic access to safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” **SOURCE:** *World Food Summit 1996*

- “**Food insecurity** is the **limited or uncertain availability** of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, **or limited or uncertain ability to acquire** acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.” **SOURCE:** *U.S. Department of Agriculture*

Food Insecurity in the United States

- Food insecurity experienced at higher levels among households with children, disabled people, veterans of war, and those who have been incarcerated
- 100% of counties and congressional districts are home to people facing hunger
- Food insecurity among Black or Latino individuals is higher than white individuals in more than 9 out of every 10 counties
- County food insecurity varies by as much as 58 percentage points for some racial/ethnic groups
- Child food insecurity rates are higher than 40% in some counties
- **1 in 3 people facing hunger are unlikely to qualify for SNAP**
- People facing hunger report needing more than \$20 more per week to meet their food needs
- 9 out of 10 high food insecurity counties are rural

Figure 2. Map of county-level food insecurity among the overall population in 2021



To access the interactive map and additional information about data availability and suppression, visit map.feedingamerica.org.

COVID-19 Effects on Hunger Programs

- 20 Million Americans found themselves out of work
- Emergency food providers find it difficult to handle crisis on their own
- Even before the pandemic: Between 2010 and 2019 the average monthly SNAP benefits decreased from \$133.79 to \$129.83 per person when the food benefits should have increased to \$159 (according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- In food-abundant countries like the US, the problem is the lack of access to affordable, healthy, nutritious food not a lack of available food

Innovative Solutions to Hunger in Covid-19

Upgrades to SNAP

- Increased benefits
- Pandemic EBT which gave families extra grocery benefits
- New eligibility waivers and streamlined applications
- Online shopping

Dairy Product Recovery

- Hunger Task Force worked with the Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin union and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- Identified small and mid-sized dairy farmers with excess milk to send to communities that were in need

Federal Commodity Supplemental Food Program

- Curates boxes of food for income-eligible seniors
- New collaboration with United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County and the food delivery platform Doordash to deliver boxes of free and nutritious food to over 1,000 seniors

Wisconsin FoodShare (SNAP) Utilization During the Pandemic



Chart from "Ending Hunger: How COVID-19 Revealed a Path to Food Access for All" from Hunger Task Force

A More Flexible Summer Food Service Program

“The Milwaukee Model”
-USDA

- The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides federally reimbursable, nutritious, free meals to children aged 18 or younger during the summer months. The meals are served at sites such as parks, schools, and community centers
 - Drawback: often required people to eat meals at site
 - During the pandemic, federal waivers allowed this program to be more flexible—take home meals, getting a full week’s worth of food
 - In 2021, over 7.1 million summer meals were served to Wisconsin children through SFSP, as well as 509,000 meals in Milwaukee through Hunger Task Force’s summer meals collaboration
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Healthy School Meals for All

Making school breakfast and lunch
available to all Wisconsin K-12 students at
no charge

SB 720/AB 754

Current Bill in Wi 2023-2024
Legislative session

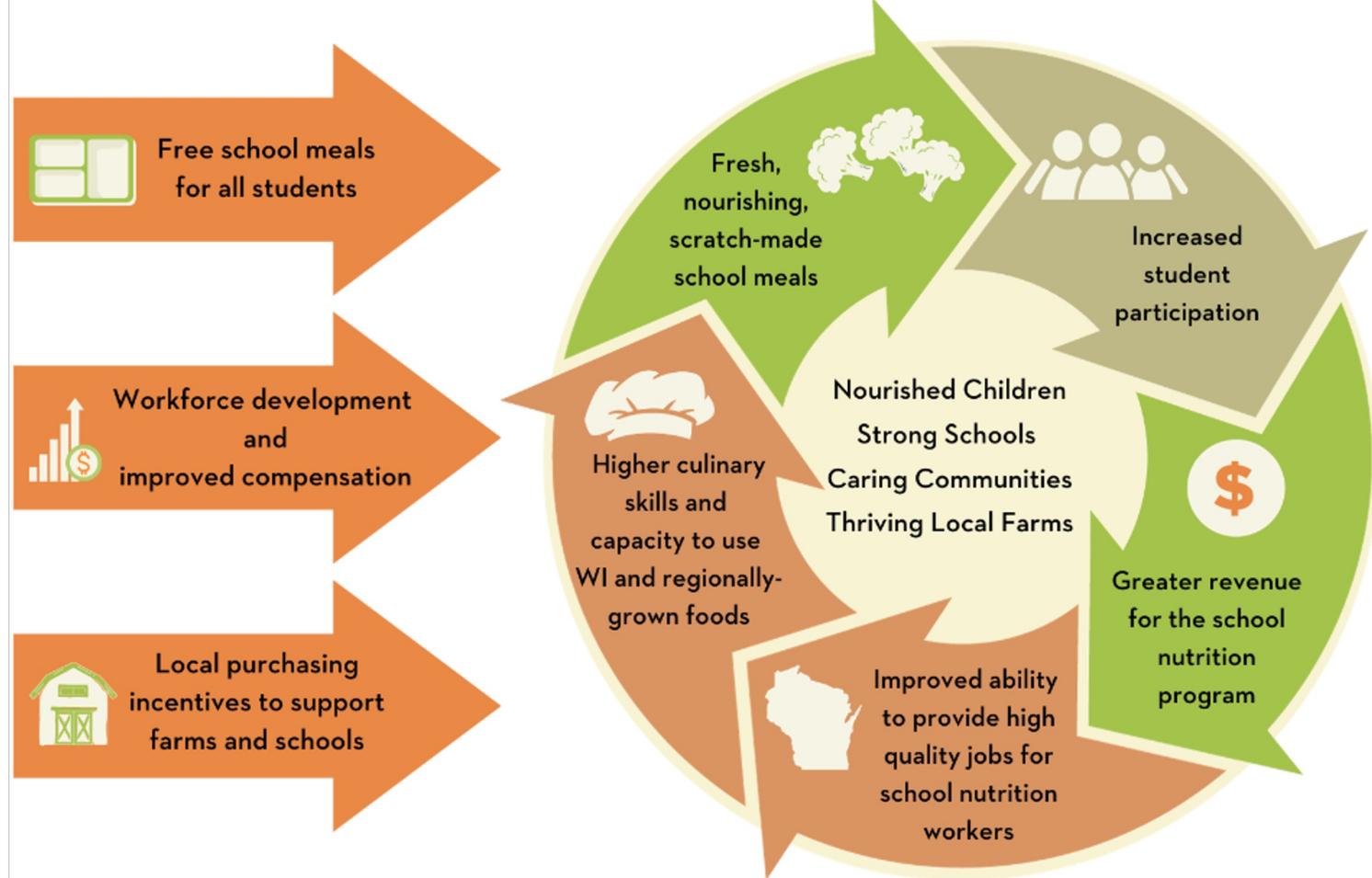
- Schools must participate in both the National School Lunch Program and the federal School Breakfast Program for the school year
 - WI Department of Public Instruction would reimburse remainder of funds needed after federal programs at \$0.15/meal per student
 - Available to school districts, independent charter schools, private schools, tribal schools, residential care centers for children and youth, the Wisconsin Educational Services Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired
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The Benefits of the Program

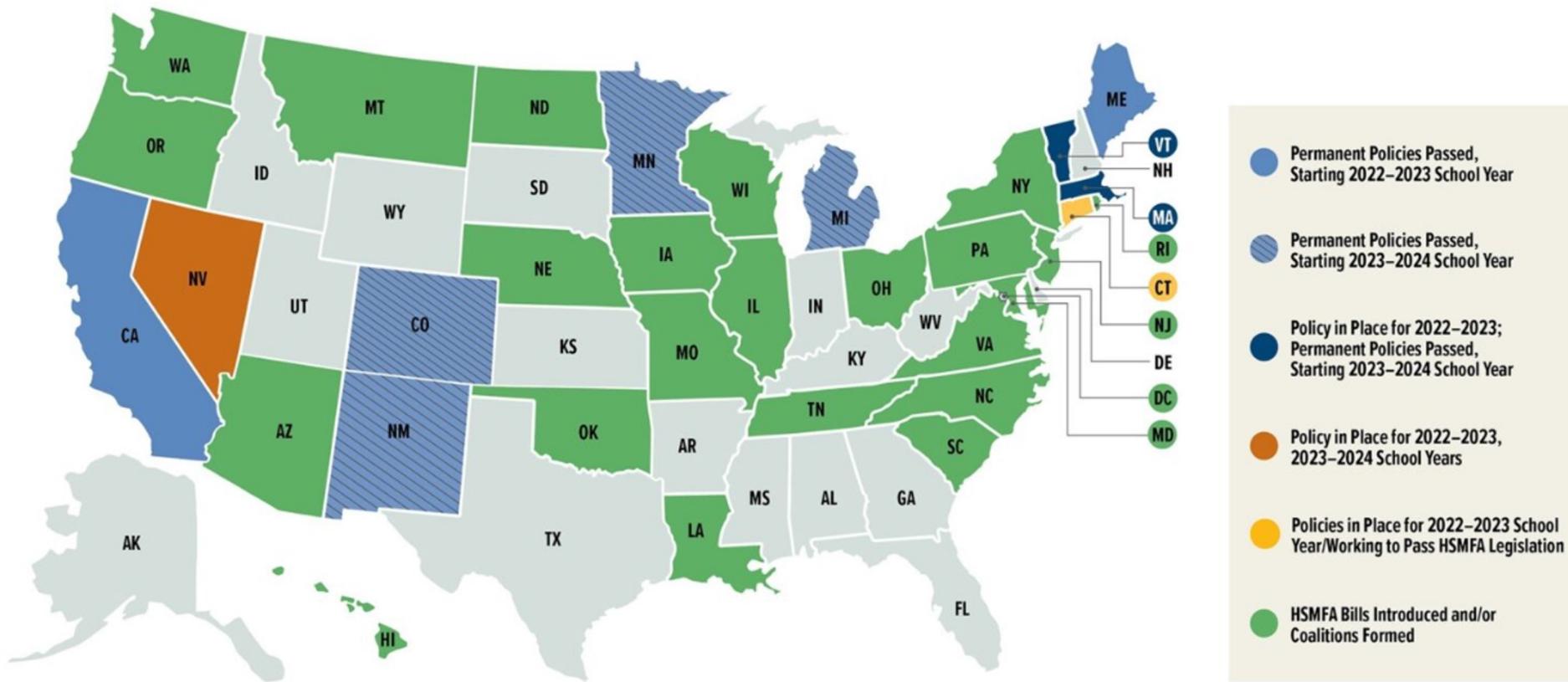
- Improves health and educational outcomes
- Reduces stigma and improves equity
- Saves families time and money
- Supports Wisconsin's local food economies, workforce, and farmers
- Makes up for USDA COVID-19 waiver program that provided these services but expired in June 2022
- SNA's 2019 School Nutrition Trends Report revealed 75% of districts had unpaid meal debt and the amount of debt has grown substantially in recent years
- allowed school nutrition professionals to focus on producing healthy meals rather than becoming de facto bill collectors
- Abolishes the pre-pandemic three tier system of full price, reduced price, and free



Graphic from www.healthyschoolmealsforallwi.org



Graphic from www.healthyschoolmealsforallwi.org



UPDATED AUGUST 2023

Action Steps

1. Go to <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/> and put in your address under “Who are My Legislators?”
 2. Write a letter telling your Senator to support SB 720/AB 754
 3. Join the Healthy School Meals for All Coalition
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supremacy in Advent message

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46.2 million Americans are living in
poverty.

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