

March 29, 2018

Representative Sondra Erickson
479 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Erickson:

As the region's leading provider of pediatric care, Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota strongly supports House File 3315/ Senate File 3086, a bipartisan approach to ensure all children receive a nutritious school lunch. Children's Minnesota serves patients from all 87 counties. Last year, we treated over 135,000 children with more than 4,500,000 clinic visits. We serve a very diverse population, with 45 percent reliant on Medicaid.

Regardless of socioeconomic status, culture or geographic location children have the same needs in order to become successful learners. They simply cannot learn and thrive if they are hungry. We see children every day who regularly count on breakfast and lunch at schools as their only nutritious meals of the day.

As providers of pediatric healthcare, we know the physical and cognitive effects of hunger on childhood development. Children experiencing hunger are at risk for vitamin deficiencies, immune system disorders, learning disabilities and other cognitive impairments. Hunger may manifest itself in behavior disorders, lack of concentration, and an inability to meet developmental milestones. In addition, children who regularly skip meals develop poorer health and are more likely to end up in our emergency room department and outpatient clinics with illnesses that could have easily been prevented. Guaranteeing children's access to nutritious meals is one small but important step we can take.

In addition, Children's supports the language that prohibits any stigmatization of a payment reminder. At a time when they are the most vulnerable, children should not be penalized or singled out for the actions, or inaction, of their parents or guardians. We know children who fear being shamed for an inability to pay are less likely to request and eat a lunch. The impact on a child's self-esteem, confidence, and self-worth could be just as damaging as the lack of a nutritious meal.

Thank you for bringing this important issue forward. We appreciate your leadership and your advocacy on behalf of the thousands of children we see each year.

Sincerely,



Maria Christu
Vice President, Advocacy and Health Policy
Children's Minnesota