



Testimony in Support of SB 1216 An Act Concerning Funding for Student Meals

Appropriations Committee
March 28, 2023

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Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio, and esteemed Connecticut General Assembly members of the Appropriations Committee, Fairfield County's Community Foundation is grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony supporting **SB 1216 - An Act Concerning Funding for Student Meals**.

Fairfield County's Community Foundation serves the 23 towns and cities in Fairfield County. We work closely with community organizations, nonprofits, businesses, and philanthropists to address challenges and identify opportunities to create a Fairfield County where everyone has an equitable opportunity to thrive. Informed by three decades of partnering with and serving our community, we have awarded over \$390 million in grants to nonprofits in Fairfield County and beyond.

The Foundation is centering our investments on creating systemic and structural change in education, health housing, and income and asset building to achieve greater racial equity and create a stronger, more thriving region.

The Foundation has long committed to addressing educational inequity in Fairfield County, granting over \$1 million annually to organizations working to help youth and young adults in Fairfield County graduate with a high school degree and prepare for post-secondary education or employment. We fund organizations that provide needed wraparound support to youth and young adults that lead to strong educational outcomes, including mental health and food support. Research has shown that food-insecure children are at an increased risk of falling behind their food-secure peers both academically and socially, and they may be more likely to exhibit absenteeism, aggression, and anxiety.

We strongly support school meals for all children in Connecticut, especially given the rise in food insecurity across the state. According to the [2023 Fairfield County Community Wellbeing Index](#), a higher share of Connecticut residents reported experiencing food insecurity in 2022 (17%) compared to 2021 (10%). This increase reflects the diminishing of pandemic relief programs and was higher for adults with children at home.

School meals for all children protect families from economic hardship, reducing their grocery costs and freeing up their resources for other necessities. When all students get school meals, there is less absenteeism, learning is easier, and there isn't any stigma about who can or cannot afford the meal. Critical funding for education, public or philanthropic, is much better spent when students' basic needs are met.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **in Support of SB 1216 - An Act Concerning Funding for Student Meals**

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Liz Hoagland, Director of Education and Workforce Development, lhoagland@fccfoundation.org or 203-750-3208.