



**Minnesota Senate E-12 Education Finance Committee  
Letter in Support of SF 1427: Breakfast After the Bell bill  
March 25, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter in support of SF 1427. My name is Bernadette Downey and I am a Senior Manager of Advocacy for Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign.

Share Our Strength is a national nonprofit committed to ending hunger and poverty. Through the No Kid Hungry campaign, we work to end hunger and food insecurity in America by connecting children to the federal nutrition programs, like school breakfast, that make sure they get the healthy food they need every day. In addition to our grant-making in all 50 states, we also work with schools, governors, state legislators and nonprofits to identify best practices and provide technical assistance.

Share Our Strength knows the power of school meals to end childhood hunger and strongly supports SF 1427, the Breakfast After the Bell initiative.

School breakfast is an essential school supply. Research shows that when kids start the day with a healthy meal, it can impact test scores, attendance rates, and classroom behavior as well as long-term health and eating habits.

Breakfast is especially important for kids who are at risk of hunger. One in eight children in Minnesota today live in families that struggle to afford enough food for everyone. Even more live in families on the brink, with enough today but only one financial emergency – an unexpected illness, a car repair or broken water heater – away from hunger.

School breakfast, however, is seriously under-utilized in Minnesota. The state ranks just 30th in the nation in successfully connecting students to the free and reduced-price breakfast program, meaning more eligible students who need this meal are missing out.

Unlike the school lunch program that is embedded into the school day and reaches a larger portion of eligible children, the school breakfast program is traditionally served in the cafeteria before the school day starts.

Many families are dependent on school buses and public transportation, which makes it difficult for kids to get to school with enough time to stand in line and sit down with a tray

before the school day starts. Further, students who arrive and eat school breakfast before the start of the school day face additional stigma from their peers.

Around the country and Minnesota, more schools have recognized these challenges and looked for ways to make breakfast more inclusive by including the meal as part of the school day and providing a broader array of serving methods that remove transportation challenges and shame.

This is a problem with a solution. Supporting smart policies to modernize the school breakfast program, making it a seamless part of the school day and increasing access, would position Minnesota to become a national leader in connecting kids to this important program.

School breakfast after the bell is a game-changer for students, families, and the bottom line for the Food & Nutrition Service Departments in schools. Serving school breakfast after the bell is a simple, cost-effective way to fight hunger, improve educational outcomes, leverage new federal dollars, and help students start the day on a more equal footing.

We hear regular feedback that a breakfast program that includes all students helps build a classroom routine, a calmer start to the morning, mitigates mid-morning disruptions associated with hunger, and keeps kids in the classroom who frequently visit the nurse's office for headaches or stomach aches.

This approach works in rural and suburban communities across states like West Virginia, Colorado, and Illinois, and it can be successful no matter the school district size.

We believe Minnesota will make a meaningful impact on its students' outcomes through this Breakfast After the Bell initiative. When children consistently get the healthy food they need, it helps them grow up smarter, healthier and stronger. And it takes smart, healthy, strong kids to build a smart, healthy, strong Minnesota.

I thank the Committee for taking the time to focus on this important issue and I urge you to make school breakfast a priority by voting favorably on SF 1427.