



2026 State Legislative Position Paper

The Georgia School Nutrition Program provides fuel for a successful Georgia by offering healthy and accessible food to its students, by procuring locally sourced foods to support Georgia's economy and offering a workforce to residents across the state. It is critical these elements are not significantly and continuously impacted.

Over the past several years, Georgia's school nutrition programs have faced many impactful variables that if made permanent would be detrimental to the program. Issues with personnel retention, food shortages, delivery problems, and remaining compliant with federal regulations have affected the ability to operate effectively. It is important to remember that food and agriculture essential workers span the entire food supply chain, from farm workers to restaurant and school nutrition employees.

In the school year 2024-2025, Georgia schools served approximately 186 million lunches and 107 million breakfasts to meet the needs of over 1.75 million students. A team of approximately 13,358 School Nutrition Employees working across Georgia in the school setting accomplished this very important feat. Georgia school nutrition programs also provide support to the Georgia agricultural industry. Georgia School Nutrition Programs spent over \$25.9 million through USDA, DOD and Fresh Produce Entitlement for Georgia. \$1.7 million was spent on local foods from Georgia and bordering states for daily meal service in the school year 2024-2025 alone.

To support the continued health of Georgia's students, and ensure the financial sustainability of Georgia's economy and school nutrition programs, GSNA requests the General Assembly:

- 1. Provide \$6.3 million in state funding for School Nutrition in the FY 2026 budget and designate this amount as a dedicated line item. These funds would be earmarked to continue covering the cost of breakfast and lunch for reduced-price students.**
- 2. Recommend that the state legislature fund 25% of the State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) cost for non-certified School Nutrition staff in all districts, and 50% for low-wealth districts. In 2011, the monthly SHBP cost was \$218; by January 2025, it increased to \$1,885—representing a 765% increase.**
- 3. Expand the funding (multiplier) for the Public-School Employee's Retirement System (PSERS) \$0.50 from the current \$17.50 to \$18.00 to be included in the current year budget and forward.**
- 4. Request an evaluation of the State Supplemental Salary formula.**

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