

**From:** "Vargas, Andy X. - Rep. (HOU)" <[Andy.Vargas@mahouse.gov](mailto:Andy.Vargas@mahouse.gov)>

**Date:** Thursday, August 13, 2020 at 11:36 AM

**To:** HOU-DL-Representatives <[HOU-DL-Representatives@mahouse.gov](mailto:HOU-DL-Representatives@mahouse.gov)>, SEN-DL-Senators <[SEN-DL-Senators@masenate.gov](mailto:SEN-DL-Senators@masenate.gov)>

**Cc:** HOU-DL-Staff <[HOU-DL-Staff@mahouse.gov](mailto:HOU-DL-Staff@mahouse.gov)>, SEN-DL-Staff <[SEN-DL-Staff@masenate.gov](mailto:SEN-DL-Staff@masenate.gov)>, "Fejzic, Emrah (HOU)" <[Emrah.Fejzic@mahouse.gov](mailto:Emrah.Fejzic@mahouse.gov)>

**Subject:** Opportunity to maximize federal nutrition dollars for many MA schools– potentially in your district.

Dear Colleagues:

First and foremost, thank you all for your support of Breakfast after the Bell, signed into law by Governor Baker on August 4th. It has been a privilege and honor working with you on ensuring Massachusetts children are fed and ready to learn.

Second, I am writing to share with you an important opportunity to maximize federal nutrition dollars for many school districts in Massachusetts. I have been working with the Mass Law Reform Institute and Project Bread to promote a federal option to maximize nutrition dollars for school districts, especially during COVID-19, where schools are chartering unknown territory with limited resources.

**Until August 31st**, school districts and individual schools have the opportunity to provide federally reimbursable universal free school meals to all students where enough students receive a federal benefit such as SNAP or Medicaid, or are in foster care or homeless. This is known as the Community Eligibility Provision or CEP. An individual school, a group of schools, or an entire school district *with 40% or more students* who get a federal benefit like SNAP or Medicaid, or meet the other criteria, is eligible for CEP. Due to the pandemic, it is likely that many more districts are eligible after the uptick in public assistance enrollment.

My school district in Haverhill adopted the CEP option in 2019 and it has been a game changer for the school district. I recently wrote an [Op Ed in Commonwealth Magazine](#) to highlight this federal program and urgent deadline. Haverhill also received \$1.8 million in pandemic EBT cards because we were a CEP school district.

Thanks to the data from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Project Bread created a [Google Sheet](#) that lists an estimate of **85 school districts that are eligible or near eligible for district-wide universal free meals through CEP. In addition, all these districts have individual schools within the district that are eligible or near eligible.** Please take a look to see if the schools in your area are eligible or near-eligible for universal free school meals under CEP.<sup>[1]</sup>

**The current deadline for school districts to apply for CEP is August 31<sup>st</sup>.** If you are able to reach out to school stakeholders about CEP, I also encourage you to reach Project Bread's Child Nutrition Outreach Program at [CNOP@projectbread.org](mailto:CNOP@projectbread.org) Project Bread has been in communication with schools and districts across the state about CEP and can give you an update about the schools and districts in your area.

Yours in service,

Andy

--

**Andy X. Vargas**

State Representative

3<sup>rd</sup> Essex District, MA House (Haverhill)

State House, Room 136 | Boston, MA 02133

@RepAndyVargas | Remote Office: 978-228-1233

[www.repandyvargas.com](http://www.repandyvargas.com)

<sup>[1]</sup> Note, the Google Sheet data is not 100% up-to-date because it uses "proxy" data from DESE. The student data, known as the "Individual Student Percentage" (ISP) would need to be confirmed with DESE, but this spreadsheet is a very good place to start.