

Testimony of Madison Whetstone  
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Submitted to the Ohio Senate Education Committee  
May 14, 2025

Good morning, Chairman Brenner and members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee.

My name is Madison Whetstone and I am a sophomore at Shawnee High School. I respectfully submit this testimony in support of expanding access to school meals across Ohio.

I urge this committee to adopt Governor DeWine's proposed budget language to help more schools with high concentrations of low-income families participate in the federal Community Eligibility Provision. This program allows every student in a qualifying school to eat for free, without applications or stigma. While many schools have joined, hundreds more cannot afford the remaining cost – even though participating would unlock substantial federal funding.

Additionally, I encourage you to create a dedicated state fund to help bridge this cost gap. A modest investment – just a fraction of what universal meals would cost – could extend free meals to thousands of students and reduce meal debt in schools across the state.

Thank you for considering this important step toward ensuring all students have the nutrition they need to succeed.

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