



## 10 Cents a Meal for School Kids & Farms

Michigan's *10 Cents a Meal for School Kids & Farms* is nationally recognized as a positive, cutting edge model for addressing childhood health by cultivating a love among young people for fresh fruits and vegetables.

This state pilot, which has bipartisan support, provides matching funds to grant-winning schools to purchase Michigan-grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans. It increases healthy food access for children in the places where they get up to two meals a day.

Yet, this popular program is stalled, caught in the cross-fire of budget negotiations between the Governor and the Legislature.

Based upon interest statewide:

1. Funding for *10 Cents a Meal for School Kids & Farms* should be restored in Fiscal Year 2020 for at least \$2 million, turned into a program instead of a pilot, and made open to K-12 school districts statewide and to Child and Adult Care Feeding Program sponsors of early child care centers.
2. *10 Cents a Meal* should be expanded again in Fiscal Year 2021 to at least \$4 million. It is time for *10 Cents*—and investing in healthy local food for our children—to be a permanent and celebrated part of Michigan's identity.

**What It Is:** *10 Cents a Meal for School Kids & Farms* is administered by the Michigan Department of Education and was funded at \$575,000 for its third year in Fiscal Year 2019; the 57 school district grantees served more than 135,000 students.

**Purpose:** The purpose of *10 Cents* is to improve the daily nutrition and eating habits of children through the school setting; and to invest in Michigan's agricultural economy. Michigan agriculture is the second most diverse in the country and primed to serve our children.

**Status:** Gov. Gretchen Whitmer included *10 Cents a Meal* in her proposed 2020 state budget, expanding the bipartisan support this program had received over the last three budget cycles. Republican legislators led the way for the program in the past—including the \$2 million, statewide expansion for 2020—with Democratic lawmakers also supporting it. However, *10 Cents* also was one of the 147 line-item vetoes made by the governor (the Local Produce in Schools line item in the School Aid Budget.)

**Results for Children:** School food service directors say the funds provide them the flexibility within their tight budgets to try new foods with their students. Last year alone, grant-winning districts said they tried 67 new fruits, vegetables, and dry beans that they hadn't served to their students before. They also said they've discovered local farms

can provide more varieties, such as differently flavored apple varieties and multi-colored carrots, that children love.

**Food Service Director Quotes:** “A lot of elementary kids don’t know what things are. The second or third time we menu something, we serve more of it. I was amazed we went through so many Brussels sprouts!!” “The custodial staff literally grab my arm, walk me to the trash, and show me how much food is not wasted anymore. It’s just huge.” “The quality of the products we are getting locally is leagues beyond what we were getting from our vendor. It really gives us a sense of pride to offer the kids such great food.”

**Return on Investment:** The program doubles the state’s investment, because schools must match the grant dollars. They do this by directing existing school food purchasing dollars that they already spend on food (usually federal dollars) to specifically purchase Michigan grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans. Schools can already buy locally grown foods with those dollars, but they typically have only \$1 to \$1.20 to spend on food for each lunch they serve, with 20-30 cents of that for produce.

**Results for Agriculture:** Schools provided invoices that showed they purchased 93 different fruits, vegetables, and dry beans grown by 143 farms in 38 Michigan counties, and that their business also resulted in sales for another 20 related businesses such as distributors, processors, and food hubs.

**Agriculture Quotes:** “It’s great to have another source of income. The more diverse streams of income we have, the more stable we are as a farm.” “Farm to school is consistent business with consistent pricing. When I started with schools I was told student consumption had doubled and tripled in apples. It’s nice to hear you are making a difference.” “When the school year started, sales increased in the fall. Then, there was a downturn over the holidays. Once school started back up, our packing ramped back up. *10 Cents* is definitely noticeable in our business.”

**Broad Support:** *10 Cents* garners bipartisan support; and also win-win support from a wide variety of stakeholders and taxpayers from parents and food service directors to health professionals and farmers. Those who have signed up as *10 Cents* supporters or provided statements of support include the School Nutrition Association of Michigan, the Michigan Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Michigan League for Public Policy, Healthy Kids Healthy Michigan, Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan Farmers Union, Michigan Vegetable Council, Michigan Food and Farming Systems, and school districts ranging from those in the Detroit region to the state’s Upper Peninsula, both regions where schools are hoping for their first opportunity to apply for the grant if it becomes available statewide. See supporter list: [www.tencentsmichigan.org/all\\_supporters](http://www.tencentsmichigan.org/all_supporters)

**Michigan Recognition:** *10 Cents a Meal* has proven itself as a powerful way to introduce healthy, delicious food to children in Michigan schools while investing in Michigan agriculture and local economies. Michigan is deservedly seen nationally as a cutting-edge leader in this emerging trend.

**Learn More:** [www.tencentsmichigan.org](http://www.tencentsmichigan.org)