



Expand 10 Cents a Meal for Michigan's Kids & Farms in Michigan's FY 2021 Budget.

It is time for Michigan to invest in healthy, local food for children all across Michigan, support family farmers, and strengthen our food supply chain all at the same time. This is essential now more than ever in a time of COVID-related health and financial hardships for families.

School, health, and farm advocates urge the governor and Michigan's legislature to:

- 1) Make funding for 10 Cents a Meal available for schools and children across the entire state in the 2021 School Aid Budget, section 31j;
- 2) Fund it at \$2 million to provide equitable access. Make sure as many children as possible in Michigan can reap the benefits of this matching grant program that supports schools in buying locally grown fruits, vegetables, and dry beans for school meals.
- 3) Help more children benefit by also making it available to sponsors of early childcare centers.

The COVID crisis has made clear to all of us how critical schools are for feeding our children. One rural school food service director, for example, has been serving an average of 17,500 meals a week to students over the summer, compared to 2,000 a week in previous years. In Detroit, which has not yet been eligible for 10 Cents a Meal, the school has served nearly 2 million meals for children at home since schools were closed in mid-March.

At the same time, Michigan's farmers are facing major market losses, with the closures of farmers' markets, restaurants, and more. 10 Cents a Meal strengthens Michigan's food supply chains for farmers, and for all of us.

And, finally, 10 Cents a Meal leverages as many federal dollars to Michigan as possible because schools rely on National School Lunch dollars as their match for state 10 Cents a Meal grants.

What It Is: 10 Cents a Meal for Michigan's Kids & Farms is administered by the Michigan Department of Education and has received bipartisan support since becoming a nationally recognized state pilot program in 2016. So far, it has been in select pilot regions, or about half of the state, but advocates hope for additional funding, expansion statewide and to early childcare centers.

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

Demand for the program: Demand always has outstripped funding, with 121 districts applying in the last full school year it was available and only enough funding for 57 districts. Districts in regions where the program has not yet been available also are interested, such as Detroit Public Schools Community District. The tri-county Metro Detroit region is where nearly 40% of Michigan's children live.

Status: Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the legislature recognized the value of 10 Cents a Meal and preserved the program's infrastructure even during the COVID-related budget crisis by including funding for it in a late 2020 supplemental School Aid Budget. The word "pilot" was removed, although funding was made available to the same regions included in the pilot phase.

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. In the 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 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: Those who have signed up as 10 Cents supporters or provided statements of support include School Nutrition Association of Michigan, Michigan Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Michigan Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Michigan League for Public Policy, Healthy Kids Healthy Michigan, Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan Farmers Union, Michigan Vegetable Council, Michigan Food and Farming Systems, Detroit Food Policy Council, Crim Fitness Foundation in Flint, 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 here, at tencentsmichigan.org/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. Observers also have hailed Michigan efforts to support hard-hit farms in the COVID-19 crisis by connecting them to food service providers in this time of great need. 10 Cents a Meal should become a permanent part of Michigan's identity.

Learn More: www.tencentsmichigan.org