



Texas Position Paper 2021

During the past year, Texas child nutrition professionals have proven ourselves **essential** to the health and well-being of children, like never before, serving more than 350 million meals so far through this pandemic. While health concerns and economic downturns have hit families hard, school nutrition programs continue to serve a critical role in reducing food insecurity. Since March 2020, our programs have seen an unprecedented number of changes, which has forced many of our programs to change the way they operate. Meals have been served from school buses, curbside, delivered to households, in addition to traditional service within school cafeterias. **While our programs are federally regulated, Texas child nutrition professionals ask for your support to help ensure we are able to continue serving children in the future.**

Texas child nutrition professionals proudly serve well-balanced, age-appropriate meals to Texas school children, directly contributing to their health and academic success. In addition, these programs provide jobs across our great state and a market for Texas agricultural products, manufactured goods, and services. The Texas Association of School Nutrition (TASN) is comprised of more than 4,000 professionals who support our programs. TASN provides educational opportunities and resources to its members, who strive to operate financially sustainable programs that meet ever-increasing regulations.

Due to USDA regulations, school nutrition programs are not allowed to carry a negative fund balance from one school year into the next. Funds from the school district general fund are used to cover negative school nutrition program balances. School nutrition program operators never want to see funds taken away from educating Texas students to make our accounts whole.

Last school year alone, due to the COVID pandemic, Texas school nutrition programs experienced more than a 25% decrease in meal participation compared to the prior year, which translates to approximately 150 million fewer lunches and 85 million fewer breakfasts. School meal participation for the current school year has also experienced a significant decrease. Two consecutive school years with drastic decreases in revenue has already and will continue to deplete school nutrition program fund balances. **Your support for our programs can help us continue to serve Texas children while keeping financial contribution from the general education funds to a minimum.**

Here are some ways you can support our programs:

- Be our advocates to the public and in the capitol.
- Promote positive things happening in school cafeterias in your local areas.
- Come eat with us when home to observe firsthand the positive work we are doing in your community.
- Use us as a resource when school nutrition questions arise.