

Chairman Heinert and members of the Education Committee, for the record, I am Jackson Harper, a member of the governance committee of the Red River Valley Democratic Socialists of America. Today I am writing to urge a **Do Pass** recommendation for HB 1475.

The bill before you is a splendid opportunity to improve the quality of life for the over 119,000 students enrolled in public education in our state. In passing this piece of legislation, you can guarantee that every pupil begins and ends each day of learning with a full belly. Twice per day, students will enjoy a nutritious meal regardless of their home situation—poverty, neglect, and other unfortunate circumstances will not dictate which child has a proper breakfast and lunch.

Public health research has found that universal school meal programs implemented elsewhere have benefited students. A 2021 [paper](#) by Cohen et al. published in the journal *Nutrients* reviewed 47 such prior studies and found that free lunch programs were positively correlated with “diet quality, food security, and academic performance”. A smaller systematic [review](#) by Spill et al. published in 2024 likewise found an association between free lunch programs and decreased obesity and school suspensions, plus a potential increase in school attendance.

Beyond facts and figures, this bill allows us to fulfill our obligation to aid those who need it. Are we not called to feed the hungry, and is that call not more dire when the hungry are children, who depend on us adults for their wellbeing? Ultimately, I am not asking for you to place your trust in a newfangled pedagogical experiment. No, I am asking that you support a proposal that rests on the common-sense premise that our children are happier and better off if they have a decent midday meal.

I thank you all for taking the time to read this testimony, and I hope it persuades you to render a **Do Pass** recommendation for HB 1475.