

Hi, my name is Kia Seidlinger. I am a parent of a child currently in Forks Public schools as well as I am an educator for Head Start.

Food is one of the basic needs of any human being. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, physiology needs is at the base of the pyramid. Physiology needs includes FOOD, water, sleep, and shelter. Why should children or any human be denied food? Many children who do not have money in their lunch accounts to eat do not eat at all that day. In some of public schools the child may be given a sandwich and a milk if they do not have money in their lunch account. What child wants to be singled out that they do not have money for lunch? If a child does not have money in their account they are not provided breakfast if any kind. For many children, the school meals may be the only nutritional meals they receive in a day.

A child being singled out for not having money to eat only hurts their self esteem and causes more issues and feeling of being different than they were already feeling. Our children have enough stress and anxiety, why add to it? Children's academic performance, social regulation, and overall behavior is improved when provided nutritional food. As adults, it is our job to help the children not cause more stress and anxiety.

Children are bullied for not having the "cool" or name brand shoes, clothes, backpacks, etc. By providing funding for all children the ability to receive free meals we are helping to prevent bullying in one aspect of the child's life.

Where a family falls in terms of social class should not be something a child needs to be concerned with. Children should not have to be worrying about money they have enough to worry about in their school day. All children should have access to the same lunches, sports, and extracurricular activities regardless of how much or how little their parents bring home in their paycheck.

Children shaming other children for having reduced or free lunches is a real thing in our schools. For a while my daughter was on free lunches and then reduced lunches. Many children were aware that my daughter had free or reduced lunches, not by her own account, but the account of the lunch room attendants and other children. She wanted to bring cold lunch everyday, instead of eat the free meals as she was being teased. I had to try to explain to her that bringing cold lunch costs more money than the school lunches and it wasn't feasible. At the time, she didn't understand the concept as we had lots of food at home. As she got older she understood it, but also became too cool to bring her own lunch. Instead of eating she sat in the library to read during lunch hour and was always running "too late" to eat at school so she ate something at the house for breakfast.

Thank you for considering to vote in favor of HB 1491 and HB 1494