



NEWS RELEASE

Center for Public Policy Priorities | 900 Lydia Street Austin, Texas 78702 PH: 512.320.0222/FAX: 512.320.0227 www.cppp.org

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**CONTACT: Lynsey Kluever, kluever@cppp.org
512-320-0222, X112**

MORE TEXAS CHILDREN EATING BREAKFAST AT SCHOOL, BUT STATE COULD DO MORE TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION AND FEDERAL FUNDS

Austin, Texas—According to a report to be released tomorrow by the national Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), 33,140 more Texas students have participated in the federally-funded school breakfast program since 2004. Yet despite these gains, millions of Texas school children still don't take advantage of the program.

The national school breakfast program was created by Congress 40 years ago to ensure that children were getting the healthy meals they need to perform well in school. Extensive research has shown that kids who eat breakfast at school do better academically.

The breakfast program is paid for by the federal government. Almost 85% of the students on the program in Texas eat for free or at a reduced price, because their families have limited income. Children from higher-income families pay for breakfast, but their meals are also subsidized.

During the 2005-2006 school year, 1,116,582 low-income Texas students received school breakfast compared to 1,091,269 in 2004-2005, an increase of 2.3 percent. The total number of children who ate breakfast increased at the same rate.

In Texas, 98.7 percent of schools that offer school lunch also offer school breakfast, ranking the state 3 out of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. However, because only half (52.6%) of the students who eat lunch at school also eat breakfast, Texas loses out on tens of millions of federal dollars each year. FRAC estimates that if Texas' breakfast program reached at least 60% of the low-income kids who eat lunch, the state would receive an additional \$32.9 million in federal funds per year.

"Kids do better in school when they eat a healthy breakfast," said Celia Hagert, Senior Policy Analyst at the Center for Public Policy Priorities, "The breakfast program is a proven way to improve our schools. Texas needs to do everything it can to increase participation in the breakfast program."

In the coming legislative session, State Senator Eddie Lucio will push for legislation (SB 73) that would encourage heavily low-income school districts to take advantage of a federal option to serve breakfast for free to all students, regardless of their family income. Known as "Provision II," this option reduces schools' administrative cost of operating the program and has been proven to increase participation. Although the school district must make up or the lost revenue (from kids who used to pay for breakfast), the reduction in administrative costs and increased federal funding from higher participation makes it an option that benefits both schools and kids.

To request a copy of the report or to schedule an advance interview with Celia Hagert, contact Lynsey Kluever at 512-320-0222, X112 or kluever@cppp.org.

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For more than twenty years the Center for Public Policy Priorities has been a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy research organization committed to improving conditions for low-and moderate-income Texans.