

Republicans' "Big Ugly Law" **Limits Access to Free School Meals** to Give Tax Breaks to Billionaires and Corporations

Republicans' extreme cuts to Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) will negatively impact children's access to school meal programs and threaten food security for millions of families. Here is how.

Background

Millions of working families rely on school meals for their children to be healthy and fed during the school day. Through a process known as direct certification, children are directly certified for free school meals if their household participates in SNAP. And, in most states, a household's participation in Medicaid also directly certifies children for free or reduced-price school meals.

Medicaid and SNAP participation allow millions of low-income students to be certified for free or reduced-price school meals without forcing families or schools to deal with duplicative and burdensome paperwork. This makes the process of getting a meal easier for kids and families. **At least [19.4 million kids](#) are able to be directly certified for free or reduced-price meals because their families participate in SNAP, Medicaid, or meet other federal criteria.**

If a certain percentage of students in a school or school district live in a household that participates in federal programs, such as SNAP and often Medicaid, schools and districts can take advantage of the "Community Eligibility Provision" (CEP) and serve free meals to all children. More than [50,000 schools](#) currently use this option to serve free and nutritious meals to children.

How Republicans Are Limiting Access to School and Summer Meals

If a family loses SNAP or Medicaid because of Republicans' "Big Ugly Law" that means kids could also lose direct access to free or reduced-price school meals. Additionally, fewer students directly certified through SNAP or Medicaid also means fewer schools will be able to use CEP.

There are millions of children enrolled in schools that provide free meals to all children. These schools are at risk of facing increased costs under proposed cuts which would threaten their ability to serve school meals at no cost to families. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [estimates](#) hundreds of thousands of children will receive less federal support through child nutrition programs under the Republicans' "Big Ugly Law."

How Republicans Are Limiting Access to Other Nutrition Programs

Making matters worse, Republicans' cuts to SNAP and Medicaid will reduce participation in the Summer EBT program, which supports over **20 million kids** and prevents them from going hungry in the summer. The Republicans' cuts to SNAP would also slash **\$1 billion** from this critical summer feeding program by limiting future adjustments to benefit levels.

Additionally, cuts to SNAP that shift costs to states will likely strain state budgets and force states to reevaluate their participation in other nutrition programs. Most recently, Governor Abbott of Texas **decided** not to operate the Summer EBT program due to the uncertainty around SNAP funding and federal matching rates.

SNAP and Medicaid cuts could also limit access to nutritious food and health services through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which also relies on similar automatic eligibility processes. Over 8 million women, infants, and children are automatically eligible for WIC in each month due to participation in Medicaid or SNAP. Because the Republicans' "Big Ugly Law" made the largest cut to Medicaid in history, **over 3 million** women and children are at risk of losing their automatic eligibility for WIC.

To see a letter from over 160 public health, anti-hunger, and education organizations and businesses opposing any cuts to SNAP and school meal programs, [click here](#).

More of a visual learner?

Here is a chart that shows how cuts to Medicaid and SNAP translate into less access to school meals, summer grocery benefits, and WIC services.

