

June 10, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader

The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
and Forestry

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry

The Honorable Glenn "GT" Thompson
Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable Angie Craig
Ranking Member, House Committee on Agriculture

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Leader Thune, and Leader Schumer, Chairman Boozman and Ranking Member Klobuchar, Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Craig, and Members of Congress:

We, the undersigned group of over 450 school nutrition professionals, farmers, food producers and distributors, public health organizations, and government and nonprofit partners across 43 states and the District of Columbia, write in strong support of **establishing a voluntary Local Food Purchase Option within the existing USDA Foods entitlement program through the Farm Bill**.

This proposal is a common sense, fiscally responsible policy change built on a simple idea: **Federal dollars should benefit our local communities and family farms**. It requires no new program and leverages existing funding, giving schools more flexibility to efficiently utilize their commodity entitlement allocations.

Challenges with the Current \$1.6 Billion USDA Foods System:

USDA Foods is a federal program that provides schools with per-meal entitlement funding for commodity food products. These funds account for 15-20% of school meal food costs, roughly \$1.6 billion per year, according to a [2023 GAO report](#). With few exceptions, schools may currently spend their allocation through three pathways: USDA Foods direct delivery ("Brown Box"), USDA Foods further processing, and DoD Fresh.

While each pathway offers real advantages, all three share a fundamental limitation: they are built around large-scale procurement that small and mid-sized farmers simply cannot access due to high volume requirements and complex federal contracting processes. Schools also struggle with the current system, facing unreliable delivery, price fluctuations, inconsistent product quality, a lack of products that meet district-level sourcing requirements or goals (e.g., chicken raised without antibiotics, organic options), and often little to no sourcing transparency.

The Solution:

Adding a *new pathway* in addition to the existing purchasing formats would address both problems at once. It would open stable markets for small and mid-sized producers and give schools more control over what they buy and where it comes from. Congress can make this possible by amending existing statute 42 U.S.C. § 1755(c) to allow schools to use a portion of their USDA Foods entitlement funds to purchase minimally processed, locally sourced foods. Schools that prefer the current system can continue using it. This proposal simply provides an additional option for those that opt in.

USDA's Local Food for Schools (LFS) program demonstrated existing strong demand and helped schools forge new relationships with local farmers. This proposal is complementary to efforts to permanently fund a program like LFS. Rather than requiring new appropriations, this proposal gives schools greater control of their existing entitlement dollars for local purchases within infrastructure already in place.

This Local Food Purchase Option Would:

- **Support American farmers and ranchers** by creating stable, accessible market opportunities for small and mid-sized producers who cannot compete through existing large-scale federal procurement channels;
- **Increase scratch cooking and improve the nutritional quality of school meals** by giving schools access to fresher, minimally processed local proteins, grains, and produce, consistent with the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans;
- **Preserve state and local authority** by establishing a fully voluntary opt-in structure that empowers states and school districts to make decisions tailored to their own agricultural economies, geographic realities, and procurement goals; and
- **Strengthen the U.S. agricultural economy** by diversifying market channels in a time of global uncertainty.

The potential for economic impact is significant. For example, if schools in Arkansas alone chose to divert just 5% of their USDA entitlement funds to the Local Food Purchase Option, this would direct \$766,000 to local family farms, generating an estimated \$1.3 million in additional economic impact, according to the Local Food Impact Calculator co-developed by USDA. More modeling on state-level impact can be found [here](#).

Our Request:

We respectfully urge Congress to amend 42 U.S.C. § 1755 to establish a Local Food Purchase Option within the USDA Foods program in the next Farm Bill or other agriculture-related legislative vehicles. In addition to this **no-cost solution**, we also support an increase in State Administrative Expense funding to ensure effective implementation and program transparency and an increase in the 11-cent per-meal entitlement baseline, which has not been updated since 1982, despite major increases in Section 32 revenues.

This is a rare bipartisan opportunity to cut red tape, invest in American family farmers, and give schools the flexibility to build stronger local food economies.

Respectfully submitted,

National Organizations

American Grassfed Association
American Regeneration
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Good Food Purchasing
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Chef Ann Foundation
Christian Animal Rights Association
Eat Real
Farm Action Fund
Food Animal Concerns Trust
Food Policy Networks
Food Revolution Alliance
Food Studies Institute
Food Systems Leadership Network
FoodCorps
Friends of the Earth
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
KidsGardening
Mercy for Animals
National Center for Frontier Communities
National Co+op Grocers
National Farm to School Network
National Organic Coalition
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Young Farmers Coalition
ScratchWorks
Slow Food USA
WANDA: Women Advancing Nutrition Dietetics
and Agriculture
Wholesome Wave

Farmers, Ranchers, and Producers

3 Pillarz Farm
Al Hamka Farm & Bakery, LLC.
Ald & Y Organic Farm
Ardis Cattle Co.
Aziz Farms
BearFruit & Grow
Blowers Farms
Burns Blossom Farm
Fishermen Against Asian Carp
Fountain Heights Farm
Frog Hollow Farm
Healthy Flavors
Hummingbird Springs Farm
Joe Czajkowski Farm
Lane Gardens/Oakdale Farms
LeGrow Farms
Little Ridge Farm
Maisie Jane's California Sunshine Products, Inc.
Mandarin Hill Orchards
Mom's Organic Farms
New Generation Organics LLC
Old Grove Orange
Olney Mandarins
Polyculture Production
Radical Shoots LLC
Redmond Farms LLC
Roots Return Heritage Farm LLC
Salad Days LLC
Shalom Farms
Shelburne Farms
Simple Harvest Farm Organics
Slate Foods, Inc.
Sleeping Lion Farm
Soil Born Farms
Start 2 Finish Farms, LLC
StarWalker Organic Farms, Inc
Sucre Farms
The Good Crust, LLC
Turtle Rising Farm
Wahrmund Farms
West Coast Products
Willow Pond Farm

Northwoods Test Kitchen
Oak Slough Farm

Wilson Farms

Food Distributors & Businesses

ACORN Food Hub
Addison County Relocalization Network
Affinity Group
Bebe Bitez
Brooklyn Packers, LLC
Capay Valley Farm Shop
Croft Market
Cultivated Encounters
Dickinson Family Farms, Inc.
Esperanza Community Farms
Farm Fresh Rhode Island
fieldTrue (Farm Fresh to You)
Fresh Harvest
Goodness Gracious Grocery

Hanover Co-op
Happy Valley Fresh Food Hub
Hidden Stream Farm LLC
Iowa Food Hub
Produce Express
RV Ventures, LLC DBA Savor the Local
Spork Food Hub
The Common Market
The Common Market Great Lakes
The Good Acre
Tucson CSA, LLC
Vermont Farmers Food Center
What Chefs Want
Working Landscapes

Schools

Academy for Global Citizenship
Acalanes Union High School District
Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools
Albany Unified School District
Albuquerque Public Schools
Alexandria Public Schools
Alisal Union School District
Alvin ISD
Ashwaubenon School District
Auburn Public Schools
Austin Independent School District
Avonworth School District
Baltimore City Schools
Baltimore County Public Schools
Banta Unified School District
Berkeley USD Nutrition Services
Bexley City Schools
Big Foot Union High School District
Black Oak Mine Unified School District
Bonita Unified School District
Boston Public Schools
Bowling Green ISD

New Haven Unified School District
New Jersey School Nutrition
Newark Unified School District
Norfolk Public Schools
North Mason Schools
Northumberland County Public Schools
NuWay / West New York Schools
Oakdale Joint Unified School District
Oakley Union Elementary School District
Ocean State Academy
Old Greenwich School / Greenwich Public Schools
Ontario-Montclair School District
Oxnard Union High School District
Pajaro Valley USD
Palmdale Elementary School District
Paramount USD
Paso Robles Joint Unified School District
Petersburg Borough School District
Phoenix Elementary School District
Pineywoods Community Academy
Placer Union High School District

Brea Olinda USD
Brentwood Union School District
Buena Regional School District
Capistrano Unified School District
Caroline County Public Schools
Child Nutrition Castro Valley USD
Cleveland ISD Child Nutrition Services
Cline Elementary School
Cobb County School District
Colton Joint USD
Columbia Elementary School District
Community Regional Charter School
Coupeville School District
Cupertino Union School District
Cypress School District
Cypress-Fairbanks ISD
David Douglas School District
DC Public Schools
Delhi Unified School District
Dorman Preschool Center
Dublin USD
Eastern Allamakee Community Schools Food
Services Department
Elizabethtown Independent Schools
Ellensburg School District
Eminence School Nutrition
Ennis School District #52
Evergreen Elementary School District
Excel Central
Exeter Unified School District
Farmingdale School District
Fayette County Schools
Field to Tray Food Service
Franklin Community Schools
Galt Joint Union Elementary School District
Glades County School District
Goleta Union School District
Grant Elementary School District
Grapevine-Colleyville ISD
Greenfield Elementary, Greenfield School Dist 75
Greenup County School District
Gridley Unified School District

Placerville Union School District
Plateful by WPUSD
Plentywood Schools
Plymouth Canton Community Schools
Plymouth Public Schools
PORTA Community School District #202
Prince George's County Public Schools
Purdue Polytechnic High Schools
Red Bluff Elementary School District
Red Lodge School District
Redlands Unified School District: Child Nutrition
Services
Rescue Union School District
Restoration Academy
Riverbank Unified School District
Riverhead Central School District
Rocklin Unified School District
Rocky Boy School District 87-J
Rocky Point UFSD
Rowan County Schools
Regional School Unit 14 (Maine)
Regional School Unit 71 (Maine)
Sacramento City USD
Sag Harbor Union Free School District
San Francisco Unified School District
San Juan Unified School District
San Leandro Unified
San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District
San Luis Coastal Unified School District
San Marcos Unified School District
San Miguel Joint Union School District
Santa Ana Unified School District
Santa Cruz City Schools
Santa Maria Joint Union School District
Santa Paula Unified
School Based Food Hub
School District of Holmen
School District of Menomonie
Scott County Schools-KY
Selah School District
Sellers Community Garden/Cartmell Elementary
School
Sequoia Union High School District

Hawai'i Department of Education School Food Service Branch
Houston ISD
Ignacio School District
J.Paul Taylor Academy
Junction Elementary School District
King City Union School District
Klingberg Family Centers/ RHS
Lake Tahoe Unified School District
Lake Travis Independent School District
Lammersville Unified School District
Lansing Central School
Las Cruces Public Schools
Lawndale Elementary School District
Libby Public Schools
Lincoln County School District
Lincoln County Schools
Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School
Live Oak School District
Loomis Union School District
Los Angeles Unified School District
Los Gatos Union School District
Loyola School
Lucia Mar Unified School District
Madawaska School Department
Manheim Township SD
Mayfield Independent School
Menifee Union School District
Mesabi East Environmental Education Center
Metro Nashville Davidson County
Millbrae Elementary School District
Millsap ISD
Minneapolis Public Schools - Culinary & Wellness Services
Monterey Peninsula Unified School District
Nutrition Services Department
Morgan Hill Unified School District
Mount Desert Elementary School
Mt. Diablo USD
Nevada City School of the Arts
Shelby Public Schools
Sidney Public Schools
Somers School District 29
South Sanpete School District
St. Anthony School
St. Michael Albertville School District #885
Stockton Unified School District
Superior Central Schools
Superior School District #3
Tahoe Truckee USD
Tamalpais Union High School District
Templeton Unified School District
Thaden School
Trenton Special School District
Tucson Unified School District
Tulare Joint Union High School
Turlock Unified School District - Child Nutrition
Twin Rivers Unified School District
Vallejo City Unified School District
Vanguard Academy
Walla Walla School District
Watson Chapel School District
Wayzata School District
West Ada School District
West Babylon School District
West Linn-Wilsonville School District
West Sonoma County Union High School District
Westbrook School District
Western Placer Unified School District
Willows Unified School District
Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union
Woodbridge Public School
Woodford Board of Education
Woodlake Unified School District
Woodridge Local Schools
Wyandanch UFSD
Yakima SD Child Nutrition
Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified School District

Governmental Agencies and Offices

Carroll County Conservation District
Citrus Heights City Council
Cuyahoga County Board of Health

Knox County Conservation District
Office of Kat Taylor
Virginia Cooperative Extension

Organizations & Technical Assistance Providers

A Longer Table
Abundant Montana
Adirondack Food System Network
Advocacy Action Network
Alaska Food Policy Council
Alice Waters Institute
Anne Arundel County Food Bank, Inc.
Berkshire Grown, Inc.
Butte County Local Food Network
Carla Curle, Consultant
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association
Carrie Frank Consulting
Center for Ecoliteracy
Center for Jewish Food Ethics
Ceres Community Project
Champlain Valley Educational Services - BOCES
NOURISH Program
Chesapeake Agriculture Innovation Center
Chicago Food Policy Action Council
Coalition for Healthy School Food
Cobb Hill Cohousing
CommonWealth Kitchen
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
Community Farm Alliance
Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA)
Cornell Cooperative Extension Allegany County
Cumberland County Food Security Council
Curricula Concepts
DC Veg Week
ENSESO4Food
Farm to Institution New England
Farm2People
Farmer Foodshare
Feeding GA Families

Marigold Collective
Market Umbrella
Massachusetts Farm to School
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
Mission West Community Development Partners
Mississippi Delta Council for Farmworkers
Opportunities
Montana Farm to School
Mutch Better Food, LLC
New Connecticut Farmer Alliance
New England Young Fishermen's Alliance
New Jersey Food Democracy Collaborative
New York Dry Bean Association
Northeast MI Healthy Food Initiative
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey
Northwest Indiana Food Council
Nourish Colorado
Nourish Partners
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
OKC Food Hub
Oregon Farm to School Network
Oregon Organic Coalition
Oregon School-Based Health Alliance
Organic Planet, LLC
Parents for a Healthy Hudson
Pasado's Safe Haven
Pima County Food Alliance
Pinnacle Prevention
Pisanick Partners, LLC
Practical Farmers of Iowa
Pro-Colorado Education Project
Products of the Aethyrs

Food in Neighborhoods Community Coalition	Producecycle
Food Insight Group	Rancho Cordova Food Locker
Food Literacy Center	REAP Food Group
Food Systems Foresight	Regenerative Agriculture Alliance
FRESHFARM	Renewing the Countryside
From the Ground Farmers Market Collective	Rhode Island Farm & Sea to School Network
Full Plates Full Potential	Rhode Island Food Policy Council
Fullwell	Rootstock Consulting
Garden School Foundation	Salvation Farms
Georgia Organics	Santa Rosa Community Health Centers
Grace Grows Inc.	Seedleaf Inc.
Great Falls Community Food Bank	Seven Generations Ahead / IL Farm to School
Green Umbrella	Network
Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities	Seven Seed Sowers Co-op
Grow Food Northampton	Shared Plate Strategies
Hamilton Urban Garden Systems	Small Wonders Foundation
Hawai'i Public Health Institute	Sprout & Savor Nutrition
Hawaii Institute of Pacific Agriculture	Sprout New Orleans
Haywood Christian Ministry	Strategic Action For Animals
Healthy Kids, Happy Planet!	Texas Center for Local Food
Heirloom Farmers Markets	The Changemaker Project
Honoré Farm and Mill	The Charlie Cart Project
iEat Green, LLC	The Edible Schoolyard Project
Institute for Ecology, Scholarship, and Health	The Foodshed Network
Institute of Design Food Systems Action Lab	The Garden Sage
Iowa Food System Coalition	The Marion Institute, Inc.
ISED Solutions	The Sentient Bean
Jewish Vegan Life	TomKat Ranch
Kansas Rural Center	Transformations CDC
Kelly Family Resource Center	Trellis Studio
Kentucky Food Action Network	Turning Green
Kentucky Farm to School Network	United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS)
Kitchen Sync Strategies	Utahns Against Hunger
KK&P	Valley Vision
La Semilla Food Center	Vermont FEED
Live Smarter Nutrition & Wellness	Vital Communities
Louisiana Food Policy Council	Voices for Georgia's Children
Lucy Hicks Consulting	Voters For Animal Rights
LunchAssist	West Harlem Group Assistance Inc
LunchBox Solutions	Wisconsin Farmers Union
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association	Yavapai County Food Systems Network

Please email policy@farmtoschool.org with any questions or visit www.farmtoschool.org/policy/usda-entitlement-local-food-purchase-option for more information.