

I am writing in support of S. 100, The Universal School Meals bill.

My name is Doug Davis and I have been a Child Nutrition Food Service Director in Vermont since 1991.

As the Food Service Director in Burlington for nearly 25 years, I have seen first hand the benefits of Universal School Meals (USM). We were able to begin our climb towards USM in 2001 by becoming the first school district in the state to implement Provision 2. We did this in the old north end, and the results were so positive that we rolled it out in other sites over the next several years. Offering USM worked to change the climate of the schools in many positive ways. It was reported to me that there were less nurse visits and behavior referrals, and reduced absences. We worked this model to also transform the way meals were served. Breakfast in the classroom became the most efficient and inclusive way to serve the morning meal, and that time worked well to build community within the classroom, and is a model that continues today.

At the same time, with lunch also being served at no charge, we were better able to plan and forecast our meal counts, food orders, and systems to allow for a much more efficient lunch period for our students, our teachers, and staff. Knowing more about the volumes of meals we are to serve allowed us to better inform our farmers and local producers, creating a much more stable and predictable market for them, but more importantly, it created what are now 20+ year relationships.

Vermont, and Burlington continue to lead our nation in the importance and value of food access and Farm to School. These two aspects of our education system are, in my opinion, a cornerstone to healthy communities.

One of the things this pandemic has shown us all is that our schools play a vital role in the access to nutrition that our families rely upon. Schools, and School Nutrition Professionals, have the capacity, facilities, and desire to continue the USM model that was necessitated by the pandemic. This has proven to be better for our students and act as an economic driver for our farmers and communities.

S.100 has the opportunity to maintain this momentum for all of Vermont's schools and communities while Vermont continues to lead the nation in caring for our children and families.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Thank you.

Doug Davis SNS

Director of Food Service

Burlington School Food Project