

## **Child Nutrition Programs: An Essential Part of North Carolina Public Schools**

- North Carolina has the 8<sup>th</sup> largest school meals program in the nation and employs over 15,000 people.
- During the 2007-2008 school year, Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs) served, on average, over 1.4 million breakfasts and lunches daily as part of the National School [Lunch](#) or [Breakfast](#) Program.
- Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or National School Breakfast Program (NSBP) must serve meals that meet certain [nutritional requirements](#) set forth by the [United States Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA).
- Meals served as part of the NSLP and NSBP are commonly referred to as “reimbursable meals” since schools receive a reimbursement from the USDA to help cover the cost of each meal sold in return for participating in these programs.
- For many students, the reimbursable meal provided at school may be the only opportunity they have to receive a nutritionally-balanced meal throughout the day.

## **Child Nutrition Programs in Crisis**

- Changes in policies and funding streams over the past 30 years have led to CNPs’ financial dependence on the sale of unhealthy foods and beverages as part of their à la carte programs. [\[Read more about the history of CNPs here\]](#)
- Currently, about ½ of the Child Nutrition Program budget comes from revenue generated from the sale of à la carte items. The other half is generated through the sale of reimbursable meals. To date, CNPs in NC receive NO financial support from the state.
- À la carte foods are any foods or beverages sold in addition to the foods offered as part of the NSLP or NSBP. These foods are also sometimes referred to as “competitive foods” because they compete with the nutritionally balanced reimbursable school meal. The most common à la carte items in NC CNPs are chips, sweet-tea and cookies.
- CNPs operate separately within the school system which means they are expected to be fully self-supporting; they must generate enough revenue to cover all of their expenses such as food, equipment, supplies and even employee salary and benefits.
- Even though CNP staff are considered state employees, CNPs are expected to cover the cost of their employees’ salaries and benefits despite the fact that these costs may be controlled by the state. As an example, if the state legislature mandates an employee raise, state funds will not cover this cost. Rather, CNPs must increase their food sales enough to cover the cost of this additional expense.
- CNPs must even cover the cost of utilities and other fees associated with using the space in the buildings they occupy; these are known as indirect costs. During the 2007 – 2008 school year Child Nutrition Programs paid over \$30 million in

indirect costs to local school districts; this is money that could be used to support child nutrition programs.

### **Child Nutrition Programs Need Our Support!**

- State and local support is needed to help these important programs break free of their dependence on the sale of unhealthy à la carte items to stay in business and to offer healthy choices to NC students.
- We can't afford to jeopardize the health of our children any longer; the time to act is now!

Contact your [representative](#) and ask them to support Child Nutrition Programs in North Carolina.