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PRESS RELEASE

Bethlehem Area School District Affirms Commitment to Student Nutrition and Fiscal Responsibility

BETHLEHEM, PA, March 23, 2026 – The Bethlehem Area School District is reaffirming its commitment to ensuring that every student has access to meals each day, while also maintaining responsible stewardship of taxpayer resources.

No student in BASD is ever denied a hot lunch, regardless of their family's financial situation. The district participates in state and federal programs that provide free and reduced-price meals to eligible students, ensuring support is directed to those who need it most. In addition, all BASD students receive free breakfast, funded by the state, helping every child start the school day ready to learn.

Recently, the Lehigh Valley Democratic Socialists of America (LVDSA) has advocated expanding free lunch to all students through the federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). While BASD appreciates the intent behind this proposal, it is important for the community to understand that CEP does not fully fund meals for all students in every district.

"Providing meals for all students is a goal we support," said Dr. Jack Silva, BASD Superintendent. "However, under current funding structures, programs like CEP do not cover the full cost for a district like BASD. Implementing such a program would result in a significant financial shortfall of approximately \$500,000 per year that would need to be financed locally."

For BASD, which serves approximately 12,400 students, offering free lunch to all students without full reimbursement would require the district to absorb substantial additional costs not currently included in the budget. These costs could ultimately impact essential educational programs and student support services.

While some neighboring districts are able to offer free meals to all students, their circumstances differ. For example, Allentown School District has a significantly higher percentage of students qualifying for assistance, allowing them to maximize federal reimbursement. BASD's financial landscape is different, meaning the same model would not yield the same results.

BASD also continues to focus on increasing participation in existing meal programs, ensuring that all eligible students take advantage of the resources already available to them.



The BASD remains committed to:

- Ensuring no student goes without a hot meal
- Ensuring no student has to accept an “alternative cold meal”
- Supporting families through free and reduced-price meal programs
- Participating in the state-funded free breakfast program for all students
- Maintaining high-quality educational programs and services

“We will continue to advocate for solutions that support all students,” said Dr. Michael E. Faccinetto, BASD School Board President, adding, “while ensuring they are financially sustainable for our community.”

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About the Bethlehem Area School District

The Bethlehem Area School District is the 6th largest school district in Pennsylvania serving nearly 13,000 culturally and economically diverse students in 22 community-based schools. The district serves five municipalities: City of Bethlehem, Bethlehem Township, Hanover Township, Freemansburg, and Fountain Hill. The district enjoys numerous community partnerships with universities, businesses, and arts providers that extend the schools’ rich curricular and co-curricular offerings.