



## Alaska Food Policy Council

PO BOX 173

Homer, AK 99603

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director@alaskafoodpolicycouncil.org

[www.akfoodpolicycouncil.org](http://www.akfoodpolicycouncil.org)

February 17, 2025

Dear Representatives Dibert, Burke, Edgmon, and Galvin,

I am writing on behalf of the Alaska Food Policy Council to express our strong support and appreciation for House Bill 12 - Free Breakfast & Lunch in Public Schools.

The National School Lunch Program, established under the 1946 Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, was created to protect children's health and well-being while also supporting the domestic agricultural market (42 U.S.C. 1751 Sec 2)<sup>1</sup>. Recognizing the program's role in national security and economic growth, a partnership between the federal government and the state of Alaska to provide universal school meals will benefit both Alaska's children and our growing agricultural industry.

We know that one in six children in Alaska are food insecure<sup>2</sup>, and that too often school is the one place where they can be assured a full meal. While we share the ultimate vision that all Alaskans are food secure with healthy and nutritious food at home, that is unfortunately not our current reality. Both research and personal experience tell us that kids perform better, behave better, and are more successful when their bellies are full<sup>3</sup>. By ensuring that school meals are available to all, the state of Alaska has a critical opportunity with the leadership shown in HB 12 to improve school outcomes and success for our children. Importantly, we will also have increased market opportunities for our agricultural producers.

Thank you for supporting HB 12. We look forward to supporting its passage to strengthen our food systems and support kids across Alaska.

Sincerely,

Rachel Lord, Advocacy & Policy Director

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/COMPS-10333/pdf/COMPS-10333.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2022/child/alaska>

<sup>3</sup> <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/SchoolMealsForAll.pdf>

Brother Francis Shelter  
P.O. Box 670  
Kodiak, Alaska 99615  
(907) 486-5610

February 17, 2025

Honorable Representative Maxine Dibert  
State Capitol Room 128  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Dibert,

On behalf of Brother Francis Shelter Kodiak, thank you for introducing House Bill 12. The Brother Francis Shelter Kodiak Director and Board of Directors support House Bill 12, which proposes to provide free meals to students in Alaska and understands the importance of making its passage a top legislative priority.

Like many towns in Alaska, Kodiak is witnessing families grappling with the harsh realities of the current economy. Our local cost of living is soaring, while the number of available work hours in our larger employers is dwindling. Survival is becoming increasingly challenging, and our children should not bear the brunt of it. Families are often forced to make heart-wrenching choices between paying rent, buying heating fuel, or purchasing food.

Children/students cannot learn when hungry, and for many, school is more than just a place of learning. It's a safe haven that meets their basic needs. By providing meals, we not only reduce absenteeism and increase learning time, but we also ensure that students are nourished and more receptive to learning, thereby enhancing their overall well-being.

Investing in meals is an investment in education, the citizens of Alaska, and our future leaders.

The proposal in House Bill 12 is a well-crafted proposal and offering meals to all students eliminates stigma and ensures that everyone benefits.

Thank you for supporting this revolutionary policy proposal. As you are well aware, nutrition is the cornerstone of learning. Students cannot reach their full potential if they are hungry. House Bill 12, with its transformative potential, will significantly enhance the well-being and outcomes of Alaska's students.

Sincerely,



Susan Smith  
Executive Director  
Brother Francis Shelter Kodiak  
(907) 942-4599



## GALENA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

PO BOX 299  
GALENA, ALASKA 99741  
PHONE (907) 318-6608  
FAX (907) 656-1368

**SUPERINTENDENT**  
Jason R. Johnson, Ed.D.

### Letter of Support for HB 12

On behalf of the Galena City School District, I write to express our strong support for House Bill 12, which would ensure all Alaska students have access to free breakfast and lunch at school. Universal meals remove barriers to learning by ensuring students are nourished, focused, and ready to engage. Within Sidney Huntington Schools as well as at the Galena Interior Learning Academy here in Galena, we have seen how consistent access to nutritious meals improves attendance, academic performance, and overall student well-being while easing the burden on parents worried about how to provide for their children.

HB 12 is a sound investment in Alaska's future, prioritizing student success while leveraging federal funds to minimize state costs. Universal school meals reduce stigma, alleviate family financial strain, and promote better long-term health outcomes, potentially lowering future health care costs for our state. As other states move forward with similar initiatives, Alaska can demonstrate its commitment to our youth by ensuring no child goes hungry at school.

We urge the Legislature to pass HB 12 and make universal meals a reality for all students. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Alaska's children. Please reach out if we can provide further insight into how this initiative benefits our students, communities and Alaska as a collective whole.

Most Sincerely,

Jason R. Johnson, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Galena City School District  
jason.johnson@galenanet.com



# HOONAH INDIAN ASSOCIATION

**P.O. Box 602**

**Hoonah, AK 99829-0602**

Phone: 907.945.3545

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February 14, 2025

Honorable Representative Maxine Dibert  
State Capitol Room 128  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Dibert,

On behalf of the Hoonah Indian Association and Native Village of Hoonah, we extend our deepest gratitude for introducing House Bill 12.

The Hoonah Indian Association is in full support of House Bill 12 and know full well the importance of SNAP in rural Alaskan communities which face the highest cost of living for fresh produce, dairy, eggs, and milk.

We currently work with the Alaska Food Bank to offer afterschool snack packs to kids who clearly would go hungry without assistance. This is heartbreaking to see, and the Hoonah Indian Association has been diligently working on food sovereignty and security initiatives since 2001 and will have a grand opening for our new 2,200 sqft greenhouse in Spring of 2025 and will offer a Farmers Market in Spring of 2025 which will accept SNAP payments for fresh produce grown locally in our space.

We know that kids cannot learn effectively, often demonstrate behavioral issues, and exhibit excessive tardiness and absenteeism. Access to healthy food and investing in food producing infrastructure is an investment in our youth and low-income households.

Thank you for drafting this proposal and your continued advocacy to ensure healthy food is readily accessible for those of the community who are less fortunate. House Bill 12 is transformational and will drastically improve access to food for our youth who need it most in these early stages of development.

Sincerely,

Nathan Moulton  
Tribal Administrator  
Hoonah Indian Association  
(907) 802-3206  
[Nathan.Moulton@hiatribe.org](mailto:Nathan.Moulton@hiatribe.org)



**Mat-Su Food Coalition**  
*Together, for valley food security*

15 February 2025

House Bill 12 support

Honorable Representative Maxine Dibert  
State Capitol Room 128  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Dibert.

On behalf of the members of the Mat-Su Food Coalition we welcome and fully support House Bill 12.

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The Mat Su Food Coalition (MSFC) is an alliance of nonprofit organizations fighting hunger in the Mat-Su Borough. We are committed to a stronger, healthier community with food security for all. We maintain a strong support network focused on effective hunger relief and food advocacy.

In the pantries across the Mat-Su we see the growing food need by the public. Moreover, many of our pantries now have programs to feed our children with after-school food resources, Friday weekend food supplies and especially Christmas and Spring Break when schools are closed. Summer also sees more programs for feeding our children.

It is very important to pass House Bill 12. Food lunch is a cornerstone in the diet of many students. Passing this bill will increase attendance, improve learning and test scores and avoid the pitfalls of food shaming in the cafeteria. It will be a relief to the parents in seeing their children with more and better nutrition as well as better school work and grades.

HB12 is good for us all, now and for all our futures. We are happy to voice our complete support for HB12. Let us know how more we may support this work. Please note our web address and my contact information below.

Thank you,  
Joseph Davis  
President, Mat-Su Food Coalition

(907) 250-5561 c/t [josephdavisak@mac.com](mailto:josephdavisak@mac.com)

February 14, 2025

Honorable Representative Maxine Dibert  
State Capitol Room 128  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Dibert.

On behalf of the kids of Alaska, thank you for introducing House Bill 12. I whole-heartedly support House Bill 12. As you undoubtedly know, students who are hungry cannot learn, grow, and succeed. Without breakfast, students are trying to run their complex bodies and brains on empty. Consistent access to nutritious meals is linked to better grades and overall academic achievement. Reduced absenteeism is another educational benefit of House Bill 12. Hungry students are more likely to be tardy or absent. Regular meals help improve attendance, ensuring students are in class and ready to learn.

Investing in meals is an investment in education. Providing meals is not a matter of charity, it's a strategic investment in the most important infrastructure of Alaska, kids in school. The future success of Alaska is dependent on Alaskan kids reaching their best potential, and House Bill 12 significantly helps with that goal. In addition, offering meals to all students eliminates stigma and ensures that everyone benefits.

Thank you for championing this important policy proposal. Students cannot reach their full potential if they are hungry. House Bill 12 is transformational and will improve Alaska student well-being and outcomes, which will make the future of Alaska brighter indeed.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Hirschfeld", written on a light blue rectangular background.

Matthew Hirschfeld, MD/PhD  
Pediatrician  
Anchorage, AK  
(907) 360-5620



February 4, 2025

Honorable Representative Maxine Dibert  
State Capitol Room 128  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Dibert.

On behalf of NEA-Alaska members, thank you for introducing House Bill 12.

NEA-Alaska members whole-heartedly support House Bill 12 and have made its passage a top legislative priority.

As you undoubtedly know, students who are hungry cannot learn, grow, and succeed.

The human brain requires fuel. Without breakfast, students are trying to run a complex machine on empty. Studies also show that students who have longer attention spans and are better able to focus in class. Consistent access to nutritious meals is linked to better grades and overall academic achievement.

Reduced absenteeism is another educational benefit of House Bill 12. Hungry students are more likely to be tardy or absent. Regular meals help improve attendance, ensuring students are in class and ready to learn.

Investing in meals is an investment in education. Providing meals is not a matter of charity, it's a strategic investment in student success and the future of Alaska.

The proposal in House Bill 12 is an elegant and well-crafted proposal, we believe it is the most effective solution. Offering meals to all students eliminates stigma and ensures that everyone benefits.

Thank you for championing this important policy proposal. As you know, nutrition is fundamental to learning. Students cannot reach their full potential if they are hungry. House Bill 12 is transformational and will improve Alaska student well-being and outcomes.

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Thank you,

Tom Klaameyer, President, NEA-Alaska

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Representative Maxine Dibert  
State Capitol Room 128  
Juneau, AK. 99801

February 17, 2025



Dear Honorable Representative Dibert,

On behalf of Twitter Creek Gardens, I am writing to thank you for introducing House Bill 12 and to express my full support. School nutrition programs are imperative to the well-being of our youth, and fostering support of healthy families throughout Alaska.

I have spent the last 25 years working in different capacities with our school districts. During this time, I have witnessed that most of our school-aged children rely on school lunch programs to feed them throughout the day. Food and nutrition are an essential element to power brains to learn. Without a reliable school based meal program, far too many of our youth will be hungry, preventing the basic tools to participate in school.

It is well known that access to nutritious meals correlate directly to cognitive function and improved learning abilities. Providing these meals at our Alaskan schools makes an investment not only in the day to day well-being of our youth, but an investment in the future health of our communities.

Alaska faces one of the most unique food distribution landscapes in our nation. Freight costs are extreme, spoilage rates are high, and cost of living for our rural families is ever growing. If we can help by ensuring meals in schools, we can create an equitable learning environment for communities, regardless of location.

Many years ago, I visited Venetie, a small village in the Yukon Flats School District, with just over 100 residents. Every morning, the teacher would provide a school breakfast. Without it, she expressed that children wouldn't show up for school. Food = incentive = attendance = increased learning = greater chances to thrive in the future. Feeding our children through school based nutrition programs is an absolute necessity.

Thank you for introducing this bill and for your dedication to healthy youth and healthy families across Alaska. I appreciate your leadership in making Alaska a better landscape for our students to learn and grow.

You have my full support.

Sincerely,

Emily Garrity  
Owner/Operator  
Twitter Creek Gardens  
39377 Woodman Lane N  
Homer, AK 99603

twittercreekgardens@gmail.com