

House Education

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HB24-1301 Noncurricular Time Programs

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

| Name, Position, Representing | Typed Text of Testimony |
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| Jackie Eubank For themselves | <p>I am writing to express my support for HB 24-1301. School lunch time is often a subject of frustration among parents. In our own district there is little to no guidance about duration or management of this time and it is left to each school to manage. In one local school, the students have 20 minutes to get their lunch and eat it before they are driven outside. Unfortunately, this time is often shortened by nearly half when the students are late to their scheduled lunch time. As a person who has joined my child for lunch many times, I have observed students who eat almost nothing, throw away the rest, and head to the playground. This isn't efficient or effective for any student, but I am particularly concerned for students who get the bulk of their nutrition at school. If they are not provided ample time to consume what is given to them, it can be a detriment to every other aspect of their day.</p> <p>I am pleased that our state is providing free lunches to students, but if we are not being good stewards of the time children are given to eat, the efficacy of the program is diminished. This is why I am in favor of this bill. Our schools need guidance on the evidence-based practices that ensure our students are getting the best out of their lunch and recess experience.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p> |

In Support of HB 24-1301

My name is Rachelle Tuttle and I am testifying in support of HB 24-1301.

Children in school are not being given enough time to eat lunch. The state of CO needs to protect a 20-minute "Sit Down Time" to eat.

Most schools (or at least elementary schools) will have you believing children are given a 20-minute lunch, what they fail to divulge is that this time includes getting to the cafeteria, standing in line and clean up before dismissal.

As far as walking to the cafeteria, this completely depends on the punctuality of the teacher. Hoping that the teacher keeps track of time and has children ready to go when lunch time starts. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and, in my experience, teachers have even been known to withhold those crucial minutes to eat as punishment for misbehavior.

Once the children get down to lunch, they must now stand in line for hot lunch. From what I have seen, these lines can take as long as 10 minutes for the last student to get through. I fear that in larger schools and with the higher demand for lunches this could be a more regular if not daily experience.

As a member of my children's schools PTO and a regular volunteer I have seen students get as little as 3 minutes to choke down their lunch. I have seen children sit down and cry because they fear they won't get to eat at all and the most heartbreaking part is watching children be forced out of the cafeteria before they have been able finish their meals.

This issue is not unique to my school and I have heard many concerned parents complain about similar situations at other schools.

The importance of proper nutrition for growing minds is not to be disputed. No child should have to sit through school with the only thought being about how hungry they are.

We need to not only guarantee these students a lunch to eat but time to actually sit down and eat it. We need to hold schools accountable if they do not uphold or guarantee 20-minutes of "sit down time".

I support HB 24-1301 because I support full stomachs for hungry minds.

Rachelle Tuttle

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In Support: HB24-1301 Noncurricular Time Programs

Thank you members of the House Education Committee, and to Representative Willford for bringing this bill forward.

My name is Greta Allen and I represent the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger. The Blueprint is a collective impact organization working towards a Colorado where everyone who lives here has access to the food they choose, where and when they need it. As a network of advocates, producers, state and local government providers, and community members, the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger is in support of House Bill 1301.

As a Policy Director and Registered Dietitian, I emphasize the critical need for Colorado children to have adequate time to eat in schools. Research indicates that students require a minimum of 20 minutes of seated time to finish their meals.

Short lunch periods impact food-insecure children who may rely on school meals as their only source of nutrition. Studies have shown that children with insufficient time to eat their meals tend to consume less, resulting in potential nutrient deficiencies. Moreover, shorter seated lunch times are associated with increased food waste, particularly in the form of discarded fruits and vegetables, which are essential for a balanced diet but can take longer to consume.

Conversely, Longer lunch periods have been linked to reduced hunger, improved happiness, and enhanced focus among students. Access to regular, nutritious meals significantly influences children's educational achievement, emphasizing the important role school meals have in ensuring food access for students.

While the Colorado Department of Education emphasizes providing students with a reasonable lunch period, the lack of a defined minimum time requirement poses challenges. Surveys have revealed that many students have insufficient time to eat their meals, thereby underscoring the urgency of addressing this issue. The increased participation in school meals through Colorado's Healthy School Meals for All calls for the research and adaptation of policies to accommodate longer lunch lines and adequate seated time for students.

Establishing this taskforce to study best practices, challenges, and opportunities related to time to eat would equip our school administration, food service departments and advocates with valuable insights to craft effective policies for the future. Thank you for your attention and consideration. I urge your "yes" vote.