

February 12, 2026
Representative Estes, Chair
House Committee on Education
Re: HB 2637 – Proponent- virtual
Dr. Michelle Vann
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I am an educator who deeply understands how closely a child's ability to learn is tied to their physical well-being. When students are nourished, they are better prepared to focus, engage, and thrive in the classroom. When they are not, learning becomes an uphill battle.

Students who participate in school lunch programs consistently consume more whole grains, vegetables, and dairy, and fewer refined sugars than those who bring lunches from home. These healthier eating patterns support attention, behavior, and academic performance. When nutritious meals are available to all students at no cost, it also removes the stigma that too often accompanies free or reduced-price meal programs and allows children to simply be children—without worry or embarrassment.

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the National School Lunch Program offers schools a compassionate and practical solution. CEP helps eliminate unpaid meal debt, reduces administrative burdens, and allows school nutrition staff to focus their energy on caring for students. When meals are provided at no cost to every child, participation increases, and schools are better supported through federal reimbursement.

Beyond my work in education, I serve families in the Wichita community through my church. Our mission is centered on connection, care, and whole-person wellness. Food security is a critical part of that mission. For families in districts eligible for CEP, knowing their children will receive two nutritious meals each school day brings peace of mind and stability—especially for households already carrying significant stress.

Kansas families and students deserve systems that support them with dignity and care. We should not leave available resources unused while children experience hunger or uncertainty during the school day. Expanding the use of CEP is a thoughtful, transparent approach that helps ensure every child has what they need to learn, grow, and succeed.

For these reasons, I respectfully support HB 2637 and encourage policies that strengthen access to healthy school meals across our state.

With appreciation for your consideration,

Dr. J. Michelle Vann
Valley Center

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