

Better School Lunches Act

HB 4813, Rep. Gordon-Booth

WHY IS THIS NEEDED?

Illinois procurement code requires school districts to accept food contracts based on the lowest bid. The current low bid structure:

- Limits the use of local produce and farm produce from Illinois.
- Lowers staffing pay and benefits and prevents hiring of trained staff in the school kitchen.
- Severely limits scratch cooking in schools.
- Does not allow students, parents and staff to taste test and rate the food from a potential vendor. (We get to taste our wedding cake, but don't get to taste test food before signing a multiyear, multi-million-dollar food contract.)
- Does not allow for an appropriate ranking of vendors on criteria such as whether the food is local, healthy, fair, humane, or sustainable-- only by price.

The National school lunch program administered by the US Dept. of Agriculture does not require low bid, and 48 other states do not require it.

WHAT DOES THIS BILL DO?

Removes the lowest price bid requirement for Illinois schools participating in the National School Lunch Program.

WHAT IT DOES NOT DO:

Does NOT incentivize schools to outsource their unionized in-house food service to a food service agency

WHO WILL BENEFIT?

- Illinois school children will benefit from wholesome, local, fresh, and tasty food.
- Illinois schools will benefit from being able to choose vendors who provide better service and quality
- Illinois farms and businesses will benefit from increased opportunity to sell to schools
- Illinois school food service staff will benefit from increased opportunity for training and possible wage and benefit increases

EQUITY IMPACT

Removing the lowest bid requirement would allow school districts to select food service agencies and vendors on a matrix of criteria, such as whether the food is local, healthy, fair, humane, and sustainable. It will give schools the ability to make equity a consideration when deciding upon a multi-million dollar food contract.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Schools have the ability to be economic drivers for their community depending on how and where they spend their food dollars. Removing the low bid requirement gives schools the ability to prioritize and support local farmers and vendors, keep food dollars in their own communities and build the Illinois economy.



WHO SUPPORTS THIS BILL?

- Chicago Food Policy Action Council
- Chicago Public School
- Greater Chicago Food Depository
- Illinois Environmental Council
- Illinois Heart Association
- Illinois Stewardship Alliance
- Illinois Association of School Business Officials Organization
- Illinois Association of School Boards
- Illinois Principals Association
- Large Unit District Association
- Woodridge School District
- West Aurora School District
- Joliet 86 School District
- LEND