



# The Senate of the State of New Hampshire

107 North Main Street, Concord, N.H. 03301-4951

September 26, 2022

The Honorable Christopher T. Sununu  
107 North Main Street  
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Governor Sununu:

We are writing to urge you to ensure that the NH Department of Education and the NH Department of Health and Human Services apply to participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Medicaid Direct Certification (MDC) Demonstration Pilot before the pilot closes to new states on Sep 30, 2022. Participation in the Pilot is an unprecedented opportunity to both feed more New Hampshire children who are hungry and to more fairly compensate schools for meeting the needs of economically disadvantaged children they are already serving.

## **What is Medicaid Direct Certification (MDC)?**

MDC provides automatic enrollment in the school meals program for children already receiving Medicaid and whose family's income qualifies them for school meals, without families needing to submit a separate application. We already do direct certification in school meals for those on TANF or SNAP; including Medicaid could ensure another 6-7,000 eligible children are enrolled in school meals. This would benefit our children, school food administration, and towns/municipalities:

### MDC Benefits to children:

We know that children who benefit from school meals:

- Have improved academic performance
- Have reduced behavioral problems
- Make fewer trips to the nurse
- Have stronger attendance and higher graduation rates

### MDC Benefits to Schools:

- Reduces administrative costs related to processing school meal applications
- Reduces school meal enrollment certification errors
- Reduces unpaid student meal debt
- Increases state and federal funding

**Participation in the MDC Pilot does not require legislative action.**

- Participation in the USDA MDC Pilot does not require additional appropriations, so legislation is not required.
  - If school districts and community partners had the resources to help all families who are currently eligible for free or reduced meals complete applications, under the current school funding formula the state would have to compensate schools for the additional “found” families without additional appropriations. MDC’s fiscal impact essentially does this same “finding.”
- There is little or no cost to the state for directly certifying children in Medicaid for free and reduced meals.
  - DHHS and DOE have had an MOU for 16 years to share Direct Certification Data so that children on SNAP and TANF can be directly certified for free and reduced meals. The process of adding children on Medicaid whose incomes are under 185% of poverty would have negligible costs.

**How could MDC close the gap between the numbers of eligible v. enrolled students?**

- Because of pandemic waivers, which created universal meals for all students, many parents have never had to fill out forms to participate in school meals, and others may not know that the waivers end this month.
- Schools still must meet the needs of economically disadvantaged children who are not identified in school meal counts, but because they are uncounted, schools are not compensated for their efforts. This could close that gap.
- We know that FRPL enrollments drop in middle school. This is because as children get older, they often feel stigmatized by filling out forms that would identify them as living in poverty. Their failure to fill out forms leads to steep declines in FRPL participation, with real effects on students’ nutrition and ability to learn.

**Other Considerations:**

- NH’s Education Trust Fund finished SFY2022 with a \$100 Million dollar surplus
- NH still has nearly \$¼ Billion dollars in unspent Federal Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds which are intended to be used to “respond to the far-reaching public health and negative economic impacts of the pandemic, by supporting the health of communities, and helping households...” Surely feeding more kids who are food insecure is squarely in that category.

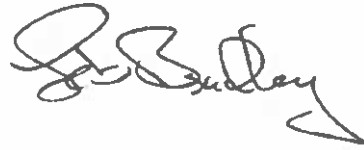
**MDC is a win-win** - for children living with food insecurity, for school and for the health of our state. We know how to do this right in New Hampshire because we value efficient government and take seriously our responsibility to ensure our next generation has every opportunity for health.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,



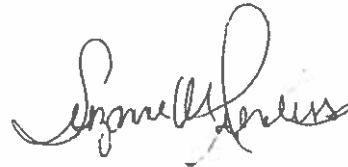
Senator Bob Giuda  
State Senate District 2



Senator Jeb Bradley  
Senate Majority Leader  
State Senate District 3



Senator David Watters  
State Senate District 4



Senator Suzanne Prentiss  
State Senate District 5



Senator Harold French  
State Senate District 7



Senator Denise Ricciardi  
State Senate District 9



Senator Jay Kahn  
State Senate District 10



Senator Cindy Rosenwald  
Senate Deputy Minority Leader  
State Senate District 13



Senator Sharon Carson  
Senate President Pro Tempore  
State Senate District 14



Senator Rebecca Whitley  
State Senate District 15



Senator Kevin Cavanaugh  
State Senate District 16



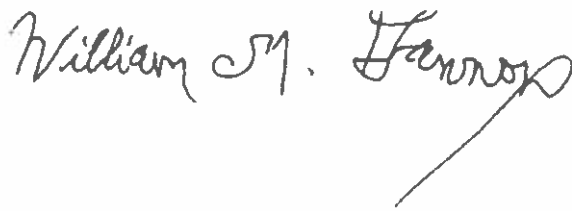
Senator John Reagan  
State Senate District 17



Senator Donna Soucy  
Senate Minority Leader  
State Senate District 18



Senator Lou D'Allesandro  
State Senate District 20



Senator Bill Gannon  
State Senate District 23



Senator Rebecca Perkins Kwoka  
State Senate District 21



Senator Tom Sherman  
State Senate District 24