

School officials are calling for greater support for child nutrition programs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The nonprofit group Mission: Readiness, which focuses on recruiting young adults into military service, held a virtual forum on child nutrition today (Thurs). Stephanie Walker Hynes, child nutrition director for the Little Rock School District, says the number of students getting meals at school has increased since the pandemic began.

News01

0:20

“...month of November.”

Hynes says on average, about half of the district’s roughly 22-thousand students are fed at schools each day. She says that highlights the need for greater assistance from the federal government to ensure all kids are able to receive healthy, affordable meals at school.

News02

0:23

“...plate of worry.”

Hynes says the district is feeding every child at no cost, thanks in large part to federal funding from the U-S Department of Agriculture and the National School Lunch Program. She says school districts should also focus on marketing their nutrition programs to counter the traditionally negative stigma surrounding school lunches.

Educators and school officials say the federal government should invest more in providing nutritious, affordable food to students as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. Officials with the Little Rock School District and local hunger relief organizations joined a virtual forum on child nutrition held by the nonprofit group Mission: Readiness today (Thurs). Stephanie Walker Hynes, child nutrition director for the Little Rock School District, used one elementary school as an example of the uptick in students eating school breakfast and lunch since the pandemic began.

News03

0:16

“...students a day.”

Hynes says the federal government should provide funding for universal school meals to help stave off hunger and malnutrition because of the pandemic. Participants also called for more federal support for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. Lance Whitney, director of SNAP outreach at the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, says federal investment in the program has a ripple effect on the community.

News04

0:29

“...are getting sick.”

According to the Little Rock School District, about half of the district’s roughly 22-thousand students are fed at schools each day. In the month of November, the district served over 140-thousand breakfast meals and over 210-thousand lunches.