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Washington's School Breakfast Initiatives Pay Off:

5,500 More Low-Income Students Receive Breakfast and Start the Day Ready to Learn

An additional 5,500 low-income students in Washington ate school breakfast last year, thanks in large part to action by the legislature that eliminated the reduced-price "co-pay" some low-income students used to pay for breakfast at school.

This is according to the *School Breakfast Scorecard 2007*, an annual report from the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) that measures national and state trends in school breakfast. Washington jumped from 22nd to 16th in the nation for the percentage of schools offering the breakfast program: 95%, or 2,020 schools, for 2006-07. Three states offer breakfast in 100% of schools.

According to the scorecard, during the 2006-2007 school year, 126,397 low-income Washington students participated in the national School Breakfast Program. The percentage of low-income students participating in both the lunch and breakfast program also increased, from 41% to 43%. The goal established by FRAC for dual participation, 60%, was met this year for the first time by New Mexico. If Washington's participation reached this level, it would result in an additional \$11 million in revenue for schools in the state providing breakfast.

The Children's Alliance has embarked on a two-year project, called End Childhood Hunger in Washington, aimed at ensuring that every child in every corner of Washington State gets three nutritious meals each and every day. The project is supported by Share Our Strength, a national anti-hunger organization, and will draw on local resources to fully implement the plan to End Childhood Hunger in Washington. Expanding access to school meals is a key strategy of the End Childhood Hunger plan.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the links between breakfast and learning: Breakfast improves nutrition, prevents obesity, improves students' achievement, and reduces discipline problems in school. But, many families find it hard to provide a healthy and filling morning meal for their children, especially as they struggle with low wages, morning commutes and work schedules, as well as children's frequent inability to eat healthily when they first awake. As a result, many children miss out on breakfast. The School Breakfast Program can help fill this gap.

Nationally, the program has grown to include 8.1 million low-income children, an increase of 5 percent from the previous school year. To get even more children and schools participating, the Children's Alliance and Food Research and Action Center recommend that all schools participate in the school breakfast program. Schools can encourage even higher participation among children by providing breakfast in the classroom, "grab and go" breakfast or offering breakfast after first period.

About the report:

The full report, *School Breakfast Scorecard 2007* available at http://www.frac.org/pdf/SBP_2007.pdf. To measure the reach of the School Breakfast Program, FRAC compares the number of schools and low-income children that participate in breakfast to those that participate in the National School Lunch Program.

For more information on the plan to End Childhood Hunger in Washington:

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