



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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At Reading Elementary School, Governor Shapiro Hosts Ceremonial Budget Bill Signing to Fund Universal Free Breakfast and Historic Investments in Public Education

The 2023-24 budget makes a \$46.5 million increase to provide universal free breakfast to Pennsylvania's 1.7 million public school students regardless of income, and free lunch to students eligible for reduced-price lunches

More than 68,000 students in Berks County and nearly 600 students at Millmont Elementary School will get free breakfast thanks to this budget



Reading, PA – Today, during a visit to Millmont Elementary School, **Governor Josh Shapiro** ceremonially signed the 2023-24 budget bill to provide universal free breakfast to nearly 1.7 million Pennsylvania public school students across the Commonwealth. Governor Shapiro and Education **Secretary Dr. Khalid Mumin** also highlighted the critical investments the bipartisan budget makes in K-12 public schools, including the largest increase in basic education funding (BEF) in Pennsylvania history.

The budget includes a **\$567 million increase** in BEF for Pennsylvania school districts – the largest BEF increase in Pennsylvania history – and a **\$46.5 million increase** to provide universal free breakfast to Pennsylvania's 1.7 million public school students regardless of income, and free lunch to all 22,000 Pennsylvania students who are eligible for reduced-price lunches through the National School Lunch Program.

"We can't expect our kids to pay attention in class, learn, and have the best opportunities to succeed if they haven't eaten all day – which is why I proposed providing free breakfast to every child in our public schools in my first budget address," said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. "At every step of budget negotiations, I insisted that universal free breakfast was a priority for me and that it must stay on the table, because I know how important it is to our kids. In my first budget, just six months into my term, we delivered on that promise, with enough funding to provide free breakfast to all 1.7 million public school students in Pennsylvania. Every public school will be able to give free breakfast to every student starting on the first day of school this year – just a few weeks from now for most of us – including more than 68,000 students here in Berks County and nearly 600 students at Millmont Elementary."

In addition to the **\$46.5 million increase** to provide universal free breakfast and the **\$567 million increase** in BEF funding for Pennsylvania school districts, this budget invests a **\$50 million increase** in special education funding, and a **\$23.5 million investment** in workforce

training and vo-tech programs to help expand our workforce and empower students to chart their own course.

"I am a former superintendent here in the Reading School District, and many of the things in the investments that we will talk about today were just ideas back when I was a superintendent here," said **Education Secretary Dr. Mumin**. "Governor Shapiro has taken the baton and he's moving forward fast and furious. We have a budget, and there's an increase of \$567 million in the Basic Education Fund. Students and underfunded schools are going to get the basic resources that they need – and with a \$46 million investment, students who come to school with an empty stomach are going to get a free breakfast no matter their family's income."

With this budget, Pennsylvania will spend over \$10 billion on public education. As a result of this budget, Reading School District is expected to see a 9.74% increase in BEF funding, and more than 68,000 students in Berks County – including more nearly 600 students at Millmont Elementary – will get healthy meals to start the school day with a full stomach.

"I want to also express my sincere gratitude to Governor Shapiro and his team, which includes our own Dr. Mumin – now Secretary of Education Mumin – for their presence and continued support of our Reading School District," said **Reading School District Superintendent Dr. Jennifer Murray**. "Today we celebrate the accomplishment and applaud Governor Shapiro and his team who, with other elected officials, have passed a budget that has the largest increase for education in Pennsylvania history. This funding is far reaching and includes free universal breakfast for children. This universal breakfast program is significant and will guarantee all students – approximately 70,000 across Berks County alone – and the countless others across the Commonwealth have access to a healthy, nutritious breakfast."

"I am very excited to be here today to hear about the historic investments that have been passed and made in our K-12 public schools and to talk about how important it is for us to have universal breakfast for students so they can start their day with the energy needed to grow," said **Reading School District Social Worker Marsha Ganter**. "Children need nutritious food on a consistent basis to learn and grow to their potential. Universal school breakfast is a huge step in the right direction for all the students in Pennsylvania and we thank Governor Shapiro for your work advocating that this program continue."

For more information on the investments made in this commonsense, bipartisan budget, visit shapirobudget.pa.gov.

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