



**Georgia School
Nutrition Association**

2022 State Legislative Position Paper

The Georgia School Nutrition Program provides fuel for a successful Georgia by offering healthy and accessible food to its students, by procuring locally sourced foods to support Georgia's economy and offering a workforce to residents across the state. It is critical these elements are not significantly and continuously impacted.

Over the past year and a half, Georgia's school nutrition programs have faced many impactful variables that if made permanent would be detrimental to the program. Issues with personnel retention, food shortages, delivery problems, and remaining compliant with federal regulation have impacted the ability to operate effectively. It is important to remember that food and agriculture essential workers span the entire food supply chain, from farm workers to restaurant and school nutrition employees.

In school year 2020-2021, Georgia schools served approximately 131 million lunches and 93 million breakfasts to meet the needs of over 1.7 million students. This was done by a team of 14,900 School Nutrition Employees working across Georgia in the school setting. Georgia school nutrition programs also provide support to the Georgia agricultural industry through **\$59M in purchases of Georgia Grown items** in school year 2020-2021 alone.

To support the continued health of Georgia's students, and ensure the financial sustainability of Georgia's economy and school nutrition programs, GSNA requests the General Assembly:

- 1. Expand the funding (multiplier) for the Public School Employee's Retirement System (PSERS) \$0.50 from the current \$15.75 to \$16.25 to be included in the FY 2023 budget.**
- 2. Increase the PSERS Pension Funding CAP from \$16.50 to \$25.00.** This will allow growth of the fund to improve the quality of life upon retirement. Increasing the benefits to Georgia School Nutrition Employees will enhance recruitment and retention for the implementation of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program to continue.
- 3. Restore \$5 million to state funding for School Nutrition in the FY 2023 budget.** The restoration of these state funds will help offset rising health insurance costs and support the primary goal of preserving quality local school nutrition programs in Georgia.