



Connecticut United Ways

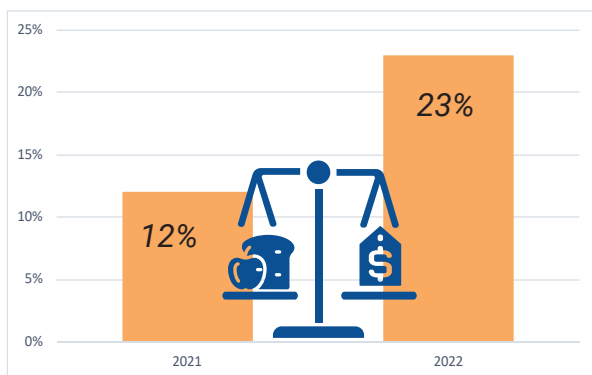
## No-Cost School Meals for Connecticut Students

Continue free, healthy school breakfasts for all Connecticut students and leverage federal funds to expand no-cost school meals.

Our kids should have what they need to learn. Providing students with adequate nutrition is essential for success in school, just like school buses, textbooks and technology.

- Annualize the \$16 million allocated in the 2023/24 school year to provide no-cost school breakfast for all Connecticut students in participating districts.
- Leverage federal funds to cover most of the cost to expand no-cost school meals — state funds fill only the gap between federal reimbursement and actual costs.

### Food insecurity has nearly doubled for families with children.



Share of adults reporting food insecurity with children in the home.

Datahaven, 2023 Community Wellbeing Survey, [ctdatahaven.org](https://ctdatahaven.org)



No-cost school meals help ensure Connecticut kids are ready to learn and have the nutrition needed to be healthy.

#### Why school meals make a difference:

- Healthy school meals for all ensure that no children — particularly our most vulnerable children and children on the line of eligibility — fall through the cracks.
- When school meals are not available to all, those who need them the most do not eat.
- Students who eat school meals achieve higher test scores.
- Healthy school meals for all:
  - Decrease lunch shaming and stigma in the cafeteria.
  - Reduce absenteeism and tardiness (especially breakfast).
  - Decrease obesity and reduce poor health.
  - Decrease bullying in the lunch room.

- Even though Connecticut is one of the richest states in the country, there are still more than 550,000 households who are food insecure, which means they lack consistent access to enough food for every person in their household to live an active, healthy life.
- In 2021, 39% of ALICE children lived in households that couldn't afford enough food; *most* of these families did not qualify for free/reduced-price school meals or for SNAP.
- Currently in CT, a family can earn no more than \$55,500 annual gross income to receive meals at no cost.
- In 2021, the USDA predicted food prices to increase by average of 5.89% in 2023 and continue to increase by 2.19% in 2024.



Connecticut United Way's 2023 ALICE Report is a data-driven, comprehensive research report that provides a look at financial hardship for households across Connecticut that are **ALICE** -- **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed.

The report shows that the total number of households living paycheck to paycheck or falling behind rose by 11% between 2019 and 2021.

The ALICE Essentials Index, which measures change over time in the cost of household essentials, projects an **18.2% increase statewide** in basic costs from 2021 to 2023. For the average Connecticut household, depending on available tax credits, **basic costs could be as high as \$39,000 annually for a single adult and \$126,000 for a family with two adults and two young children.**

[ALICE.CTUNITEDWAY.ORG](https://www.alice.ctunitedway.org)

## Connecticut Household Survival Budget 2021

Monthly Costs	Single Adult	2 Adults 1 Infant 1 Preschooler
Housing – Rent	\$801	\$1,111
Housing – Utilities	\$154	\$292
Child Care	-	\$2,188
Food	\$499	\$1,360
Transportation	\$357	\$834
Health Care	\$241	\$815
Technology	\$75	\$110
Miscellaneous	\$213	\$671
Tax Before Credits	\$420	\$1,505
<b>Monthly Total</b>	<b>\$2,760</b>	<b>\$8,886</b>
<b>ANNUAL TOTAL Before Credits</b>	<b>\$33,120</b>	<b>\$106,632</b>
<b>Full-Time Hourly Wage*</b>	<b>\$16.56</b>	<b>\$53.32</b>
Tax Credits (CTC and CDCTC)	-	(\$15,204)
<b>ANNUAL TOTAL with Credits</b>	<b>\$33,120</b>	<b>\$91,428</b>
<b>Full-Time Hourly Wage</b>	<b>\$16.56</b>	<b>\$45.71</b>

\*Hourly wage needed, for one worker or for two workers, to cover the Household Survival Budget working full-time (40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year).

If you have questions or would like to discuss this policy agenda, please contact:

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