

STATE OF ARKANSAS
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

PROCLAMATION

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS COME – GREETINGS:

WHEREAS: The School Breakfast Program plays a key role in ensuring that Arkansas students are healthy, active, and ready to learn every day so they can reach their full academic potential. According to the Food Research and Action Center, school breakfast leads to improved dietary intake, reduced food insecurity, better test scores, improved student health, fewer distractions in the classroom throughout the morning, and fewer missed days of school; and

WHEREAS: According to the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), more than 310,000 Arkansas students (65.5 percent) qualified for free or reduced priced school meals in the 2020-2021 school year; and

WHEREAS: Breakfast After the Bell programs, which make breakfast part of the school day, have been shown to be effective ways of ensuring more students realize the benefits of breakfast. Since Breakfast After the Bell programs were introduced in Arkansas schools in the 2011-2012 school year, the number of breakfast meals served to students has increased by 5.3 million; and

WHEREAS: Offering breakfast as part of the school day improves children's diets and allows students to begin their days focused and ready to learn. The benefits of these models are maximized when eligible schools offer free meals to all students at no cost. Since Breakfast After the Bell programs were introduced in Arkansas schools in the 2011-2012 school year, USDA school breakfast reimbursements have increased by more than \$15 million dollars; and

WHEREAS: When faced with school closures in March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, school district child nutrition teams across the state rose to the challenge, finding innovative ways to continue to deliver meals to their students. Whether meal delivery took place in the classroom, in reconfigured school dining areas, through grab and go meal boxes, bus stop deliveries, or delivered to students' homes, 90 percent of Arkansas school districts continued to provide meals to their students during school closures, as compared to 30 percent of school districts nationwide; and

WHEREAS: Student nutrition is an important part of Arkansas's plan under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, which is centered around a student-focused vision of providing access and opportunities that value each student's success; and

WHEREAS: R.I.S.E. Arkansas (Reading Initiative for Student Excellence) through ADE seeks to establish a culture of reading in Arkansas by coordinating with community partners to promote this year's School Breakfast Month theme of Books and Breakfast, which encourages healthy eating and reading habits for all students;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ASA HUTCHINSON, Governor of the State of Arkansas, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the laws of the State of Arkansas, do hereby proclaim March 2021, as

ARKANSAS SCHOOL BREAKFAST MONTH

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Arkansas to be affixed this 23rd day of February, in the year of our Lord 2021.



Attest:

John Thurston
John Thurston, Secretary of State

Asa Hutchinson
Asa Hutchinson, Governor