

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) as it is currently administered under Illinois law requires school districts to select the lowest bidder from among those vendors who submit bids. Unfortunately, some vendors bid low to secure a contract, and then cut their service or the quality of their products. The school district suffers a year of bad food service and then must go through the bidding process once again, hoping for a high-quality food vendor at the lowest bid.

In contrast, 48 other states that participate in the NSLP allow for a matrix format of evaluation, which awards points for a taste test, site inspections, interview of the management team, the menu, menu integrity, as well as for price per meal. **HB1782** would permit Illinois school districts to grade potential food service vendors with a matrix to better evaluate contractors and allow meaningful participation of students and staff in the evaluation process. The goal is to improve food service for students, some of whom rely on free breakfast and lunch as their sole source of nutrition. Current law requires only the lowest-priced meal, but our goal should be to provide the best quality of service and food at a competitive price. Low bid contracts do not promote farm to table or locally sourced food or fresher more perishable food, it hinders those options.

**HB1782** will not change or reduce the safeguards already in place for unionized staff or districts that currently operate their food service in-house. This bill is not intended to make it easier for districts to switch from in-house to outsourced food service. This bill is to improve those programs currently outsourced and under NSLP to improve quality and service.  
*(This is currently a concern of organized labor.)*

**2020 has proven how important this service is for our children.**

**When schools had to close their doors, school kitchens remained open feeding all who needed, and are still doing so today.**

**Now it's more important than ever to make sure our food service is awarded based on the product and service a vendor can provide not because it's the cheapest. We need higher quality meals, our kids deserve better.**

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