Dietary fiber is essential for optimal health and disease prevention, and is found in foods we know support health: fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. Deficiency is linked with type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, bowel diseases, and some cancers. Consumption of fiber-rich foods plays an important role in gut microbiome, which is also tied to chronic diseases like allergy, asthma, and more.

**WHY FIBER?**

**The deficiency is nearly universal**
Up to 97% of children* are deficient in dietary fiber consumption

**The inadequacy is significant**
Children in the U.S. consume only half the recommended minimum intake of fiber*

**No standard exists**
Despite naming a fiber a “nutrient of concern,” the USDA has no minimum standard for fiber content in school meals

**The issue is widespread**
Balanced’s 2022 analysis of school meals found that school meals fall short of fiber adequacy by 20-35% on average

**The opportunity is huge**
22.6 million children eat school lunch every day in the U.S. and 12.4 million consume school breakfast

*NHANES 2015-2018

**WHY SCHOOL MEALS?**

**HOW IT HELPS**

In addition to decreasing the nutrient gap and promoting better overall health, achieving our campaign goals will positively contribute to:

**Academic Achievement**
The Brookings Institution found that schools that commit to healthier menus see improved attendance, grades, test scores, and classroom behavior.

**Health Equity**
Students of color are already disproportionately impacted by diseases that are linked to fiber-deficient diets, so setting standards for fiber content of school meals can support better health in those communities.

**Environment**
Fiber is found in whole plant foods, which overall require less land and water to produce as compared to animal-source foods. Additionally, more seat time for students could decrease food waste.

**HOW TO SUPPORT**

- Endorse the campaign as your organization and/or as an individual at thebalancedorg.typeform.com/standforfiber
- Share content like our White Paper within your network of contacts and/or on social media

Still have questions? Contact our Advocacy Manager at andreaj@balanced.org.