



Communications and Advocacy Toolkit

A guide to advocating for a Local Food
Purchasing Incentive (LFPI) in Pennsylvania

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Introduction	2
Background: Keystone Fresh Act	3
Advocacy 101	4
The Questions for Farm to School Advocacy	5
Contacting Your Legislator	6
Calling Your Legislator	7
Emailing Your Legislator	8
Meeting Your Legislator	9
Inviting Legislators to Your Events	11
Mobilize This October! National Farm to School Month	12
Social Media	13
Endorsements	14
Appendix A: Emailing Your Legislator	A1-A6
Appendix B: Literature and Memorandum	B1-B4

Introduction

Whether you are a farm to school professional, a student, a parent, a farmer, or simply a passionate member of your community, this guide is here to help you advocate for farm to school policy in Pennsylvania! This Communications Toolkit is built to provide resources that will assist you in making farm to school policy a reality. It's already on the way in Pennsylvania.

In May of 2023, Pennsylvania Democratic Rep. Danilo Burgos and Republican Rep. Jonathan Fritz announced the Keystone Fresh Act. **This bill will bring a Local Food Purchasing Initiative (LFPI) to Pennsylvania by providing funds to schools to purchase PA food products for PA school meals, to guarantee economic success for our farmers and nutritious meals for our students.** Now the next steps are to get it through the General Assembly and onto the Governor's desk. To do this, **we have to make sure lawmakers across the aisle see the benefits of local food in school meals and know that their constituents support this idea.** We hope that this toolkit will help you encourage lawmakers to make the Keystone Fresh Act a reality for PA!

[The Keystone Fresh Act](#) will provide schools with additional funds to help offset the cost of purchasing local foods. Additionally it will provide for technical assistance to support farmers' ability to serve the institutional food market and support schools to serve more local, fresh foods effectively removing the primary barriers to Farm to School expansion inside of the Commonwealth.

Legislators need to know that you want it to happen! This means sharing your personal opinion and stories related to local food in school meals by notifying legislator's offices through calls and emails, meeting with them one on one, engaging in social media campaigns, and more. This guide is built for you so you can advocate the way you want!



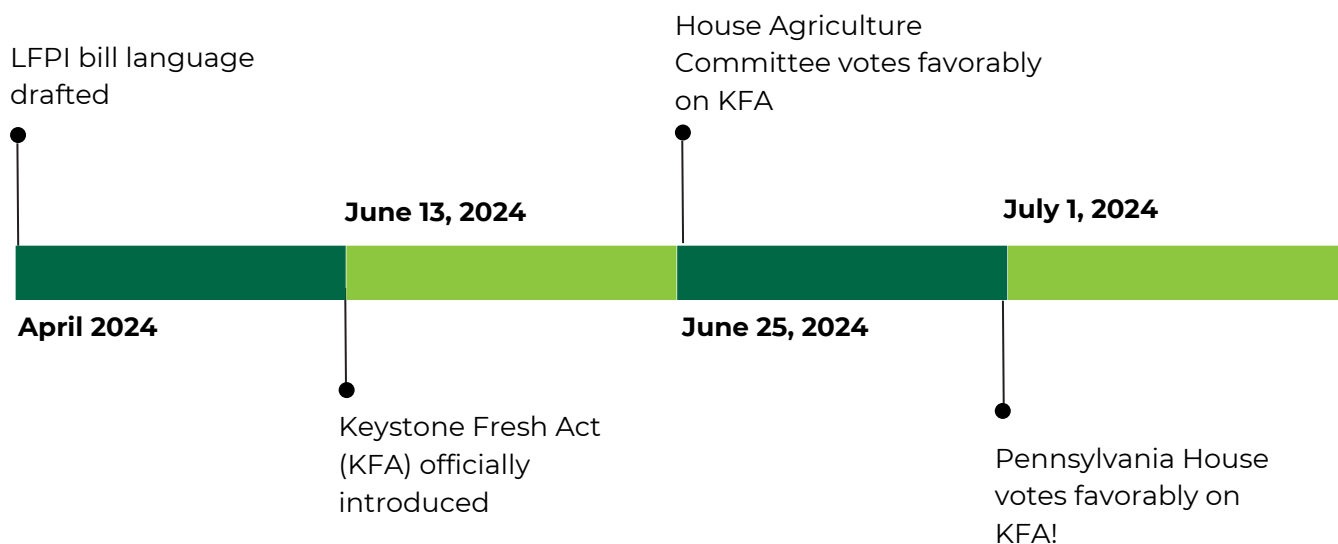
Background: Keystone Fresh Act

Farm to school in Pennsylvania has been gaining momentum over the last several years. 71.4% of School Food Authorities (SFAs) in Pennsylvania serve local food in the cafeteria, according to the [USDA Farm to School Census](#), and we'd love to see that number rise with the help of Pennsylvania's own LFPI. Through years of hard work and research, Pennsylvania finally has its own LFPI ready to be made into a reality - [The Keystone Fresh Act](#). The Keystone Fresh Act will **provide Pennsylvania family farmers with more stable economic prospects and ensure that schools have access to fresh, locally sourced foods**. Changing procurement practices takes technical assistance and resources, which is why the Keystone Fresh Act would also **provide funding for farmers to purchase equipment or marketing materials that meet school food market needs**. Additionally, it would allocate funding for technical assistance providers to offer **trainings for schools, farmers, and distributors making this food systems shift**. The Keystone Fresh Act will provide:

- Grants to offset the cost of purchasing local foods for school meals and necessary equipment to process whole foods;
- Technical assistance and funds for equipment and marketing to support PA producers' ability to meet the needs of school meal standards; and
- Technical assistance to support schools with cooking techniques to utilize unprocessed products in school meals.

Read the full bill text [here](#).

Timeline



Farm to School Advocacy 101

Establish Relationships

- **Engage on social media.** Do you have a Facebook page or online newsletter where you share farm to school updates? Add, tag, or invite policymakers so they can stay up to date with the great work you are doing.
- **Post to social media.** Share a picture, story, event, or fact about farm to school in action in your community to social media. Tag your elected officials and thank them for their support!
- **Introduce yourself to or meet with your elected officials.** This way they know you, your work, and how it relies on what they do if later you need to call on them for something!
- **Hosting an event?** Invite your elected officials to attend. Invite them to say a few words, participate in a school garden event, eat a local meal with students, or sit in on a farm to school lesson so they can see your farm to school work in action!

Talk to Your Legislators

- Join the [Pennsylvania Farm To School Network](#) (or an advocacy group or association active in your area - like a local food policy council) to share your ideas and experiences and learn about or organize for group advocacy opportunities. We go farther together! Sign on to a letter to show your support for a specific policy, budgetary, or programmatic idea or request. Find out today what the process is in your organization, business, or school to sign onto group advocacy letters so you are ready to take action when an opportunity arises.
- **Call your legislator.** Make sure to introduce yourself, be specific about your request and explain why it is important, and always remember to be polite!
- **Write an email or letter.** Ask your legislator to take a specific action and share an example, story, or statistics to illustrate the potential impact of this action on your community—and their constituents!
- **Meet with your elected officials.** Share your idea and story in a one-on-one meeting with your legislator or join with a group of other farm to school advocates to share your experiences and concerns and ask for your legislator's support. It is easier than ever to set up a virtual meeting—no travel to Harrisburg required!



And finally, don't forget—one of the most important ways you can help be an advocate for farm to school is to vote for people who support this issue!

The Questions for Farm to School Advocacy

WHO

- You! You know the most about your own experiences and as a constituent with a vote, you have a story to tell.
- Your community. Work together with others in your farm to school program or network to explain what farm to school means to your community. The [PA Farm to School Network](#) and [The Food Trust](#) is a like-minded community.

WHERE

- Online: Engage in social media activism. **Let your community know about your events and policy!** People often get their news and politics from their friends, family, and social media circles. Also, make sure to see if there are virtual town halls involving your legislator!
- In Person: **Meet with elected officials and their staff in your district and in Harrisburg** and always extend the invite to your events or for a conversation!

WHEN

- Advocacy can be as quick as posting on Instagram, Facebook, or X, calling your elected representative, or emailing. We have plenty of drafts below to get you started! You can be a farm to school advocate even if you only have 5 minutes!
- Advocacy to the Governor about the budget and the State of the State address happens in February. The General Assembly begins recess in July but will reconvene in September. **Planning ahead for the Fall is a surefire way to get a jumpstart on Advocacy.**

WHY

- Policymakers want to understand what's happening in the communities they represent, how they can help constituents, and whether the needs of their constituents are being met. We need to let them know that the Keystone Fresh Act is a win for Pennsylvania's Economy, Public Health, and Communities.
- When the General Assembly is in session, there is often so many bills and co-sponsorship flying around that legislators can't keep track of it. Advocating for existing bills such as the Keystone Fresh Act will keep it on their mind!
- Visually celebrating your farm to school successes, sharing their impact on your students' health and the local economy, and communicating barriers you face that your elected officials can help with is key to building and sustaining support for successful farm to school programs.

HOW

- Build relationships with your elected officials by telling them who you are, what you do, and inviting them to learn about and experience your farm to school work firsthand! It is much easier to be heard when you make requests of your representatives if you have a relationship with them first.
- Share stories based on your own experiences or share data (like how many more students are eating more healthy local food) with policymakers to illustrate how state farm to school policies or programs they might support are positively impacting the communities they represent.
- Engage in phone calls and emails with your local district office. They'll remember you! Be sure to consistently contact to have your voice heard. Share with family and friends, it doesn't just have to be you.

Contacting Your Legislators

This section provides email templates to be sent to your legislator or any legislator of interest, advocating for the Keystone Fresh Act. The three pillars or three wins of the Keystone Fresh Act are reflected in the three example advocacy letters. These are economic wins, public health wins, and community wins. **Economic wins** focus on increasing stable economic opportunities for PA family farmers and sustaining local food system market expansion. **Public health wins** focus on increasing the quantity of fresh, local products served in school meal programs as well as environmental equity gains through incentivizing sustainable agriculture; cleaner air, water and soil for everyone. **Community wins** focus on connecting farmers back to their communities, connecting students to local agriculture, and supporting community food security and local supply chains.

Each Representative and Senator has different policy focuses and passions. These advocacy letters can be tailored based on the 'best-choice' that applies to their area of focus. For example, public health win may resonate much more with an official passionate about education and health while the economic win may resonate much more with an official who cares much more about fiscal spending and economic growth. Each letter will have a section for you to plug in three quick facts from the quick fact section that will be most effective when paired with the proper letter to address the Representative or Senator's area of focus or whatever facts you care most about. Be creative!

What you can do:

Call or email your PA legislators (both your Senator and House Representative) and ask them to support the Keystone Fresh Act when it comes up for a vote.

How-to:

1. Look up your PA Senator and House Representative using [this link](#).
2. Find their phone number or email by clicking on the hyperlink for your PA House Representative and PA Senator and looking on the left-hand side of the webpage.
3. Review the sample message below as a guide.
4. Make the phone call or send an email to both your House Representative and Senator.
5. Please note, you may be asked to provide your contact information (address and phone number) so the Legislator's staff can track the calls from constituents.
6. [Sign the supporter form](#) to stay informed about future opportunities to take action and help ensure the Keystone Fresh Act passes and is funded!

Calling Your Legislator

Calling your legislator is an effective measure that gets your voice heard! When you call your legislator, you will be answered by an office associate who works directly for the representative and their job is to relay your thoughts, feelings, and opinions to the legislator. While it may seem disheartening that you most likely won't be able to talk to the legislator directly, your voice will still be heard. Constituent services advisors and constituent liaisons are responsible for handling interactions with community members so that they can educate the legislator on pressing issues, like LFPI!

When you call, use the sample phone scripts below to briefly advocate for the Keystone Fresh Act. It shouldn't take more than a couple minutes! You can be brief or you can take your time to express your feelings more in depth. When legislator offices receive advocacy calls they keep track of the volume which helps gain support for the bill and will urge the legislator to consider supporting it!

Sample Script

Use this script when calling your Representative's office - leave a message or share this info with whoever answers the phone.

“My name is [name] and I live in [town, county] and would like to encourage Representative ____ to support HB 2420, also known as the Keystone Fresh Act, a bipartisan bill by Reps. Burgos and Fritz. This act will increase the quantity and variety of Pennsylvania products served in school meal programs and establish vital resources for Pennsylvania's family farmers to participate in the school food market.

[optional] I support this legislation because... (choose one or share your own reason!)

- I want my kids and other kids in the state to experience fresh, local nutritious food in their school meals
- I support local farmers in my area and would love to see their products featured on the school menus - opening up a critical market for their business
- I care about kids knowing where their food comes from and being meaningfully connected to a thriving local food system

Thank you and have a nice day!

Emailing Your Legislator

Emailing your legislator is another very effective means of having your voice heard! While it is best combined with both a phone call, simply sending an email is easy, quick, and can be replicated in a short time to tons of other legislators with little effort. Emails are valuable because they are documented and kept track of by your legislator and informs them of pressing issues in their community. The more they receive emails, the more they know that their constituents care about issues such as LFPI and will encourage them to listen and vote with what their constituents want! Emails are very effective because they can be easily replicated and will encourage your legislator to keep the issue in mind.

Suggested Message:

Hello,

My name is [your name] and I live in [town, county] and would like to encourage Representative/Senator [your Rep/Senator's name] to support the Keystone Fresh Act - House Bill 2420 recently introduced by Rep. Burgos and Rep. Fritz. This act will increase the quantity and variety of Pennsylvania food products served in school meal programs and establish vital resources for Pennsylvania's family farmers to participate in the school food market.

[optional] I support the Keystone Fresh Act because... (choose one or share your own reason!)

- I want my kids and other kids in the state to experience fresh, local nutritious food in their school meals
- I support local farmers in my area and would love to see their products featured on the school menus - opening up a critical market for their business
- I care about kids knowing where their food comes from and becoming meaningfully connected to a thriving local food system

Thank you for your time!

[NAME]

Click [here](#) or scan the QR code for more sample emails that are ready for you to copy, paste, and send to your legislator.



Meeting Your Legislator

Meeting with your legislator can be stressful! But don't fret, they're busy people but people nonetheless. When you meet, make sure you have your goals clear in what you want. Time is precious and you'll most likely not have much of it to advocate for the Keystone Fresh Act or Farm to School Policy in general. Here are some best practices:

- Be kind, shake hands, and don't be disingenuous. Both of your times are valuable. But be genuine and don't be afraid of small talk.
- Often, Chiefs of Staff or their District Office Directors will handle scheduling. Be honest, genuine, and upfront with them. They are often the doorways to legislators so having a relationship or report with them is super helpful.
- Expect meetings to range from 15 minutes to 1 hour. In-person is best but virtual meetings are almost always more convenient for legislators and they may be more willing to make time for you if it's a no-stress virtual.
- **Have a list of points** you want to make and rehearse before you meet. It always helps to be confident and know your asks before you meet!
- **Bring literature** for them! If you have Farm to School educational content, information on your specific role, industry, or community, bring it to their attention. Them or a staffer may read it!
- Don't be disheartened if they cancel or if a meeting is short. Legislators are very busy people and because of politics, things are always subject to change. But don't let that stop your advocacy. If your meeting is canceled, try and schedule a new one! If they no longer want to meet, keep calling and sending advocacy emails and letters! Your voice will still be heard.



Talking Points

Talking points are a great tool if you're meeting with your legislator. Whether virtually or in-person, having a memorized or physical list of points to discuss is important for keeping your meeting concise and focused. This is important for keeping the legislator engaged and hopefully getting them interested in the Keystone Fresh Act or Farm to School Policy in general. Below is a list of quick facts and talking points to help you organize your pitch:

- The Keystone Fresh Act is a bipartisan bill. It was jointly co-sponsored by Democratic Representative Danilo Burgos and Republican Representative Jonathan Fritz.
- The Keystone Fresh Act is modeled after 16 other states across the country. Each successfully implementing Local Food Purchasing Initiatives
- Local Food Purchasing Initiatives, commonly known as LFPI's are competitive or noncompetitive funds that go directly to schools to purchase locally produced food.
- **Economic Win:**
 - Increasing stable, economic opportunities for PA family farmers
 - Sustaining local food system growth.
 - Example: Local Foods Systems Impact Calculator (LFSIC) calculated the impact of a \$500,000 Colorado LFPI investment had a valuation of \$864,001.38 in local economic benefit.
- **Public Health Win:**
 - Increasing the quantity of fresh, local products served in school meal programs.
 - Environmental amelioration through incentivizing sustainable agriculture, meaning cleaner, air, water and soil for everyone.
- **Community Win:**
 - Connecting farmers back to their communities by keeping their products inside of the community.
 - Connecting schools and students back to their local farmers, growing PA's next generation of citizens who care about Pennsylvania agriculture.

Utilize the following resources in your meeting as well:

- [Keystone Fresh Act Fact Sheet](#)
- [Keystone Fresh Act FAQ](#)
- [PA Department of Education Investigative Report on Local Food Purchasing Incentives](#)

Inviting Legislators to Your Events

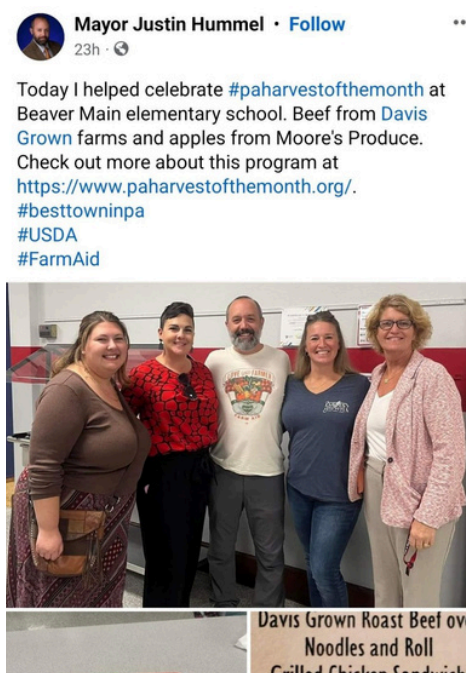
Building relationships with your legislators is a great way to support systemic changes that can further farm to school programs. One great way to start or continue building relationships is to invite your legislators to your school to see your farm to school activities in action! Here are some tips and resources to help you get started:

- **Plan with purpose and be clear and concise.** If you are meeting with the legislator at your event, in Harrisburg, or their district office, let them know why! It helps to be upfront so you can gauge their attitudes and so there's clear communication about the purpose of your meeting or attendance.
- Other people in your school community - like the principal, school board and communications director - may want to be informed of your plans or could be helpful in coordinating the invitation to legislators. Include any relevant community members, especially if there are certain approval processes you should follow.
- **Contact your legislator's office to give advance notice and share details of the event.** You can look up your PA Senator and House Representative [using this link](#). Be sure to tell them when and where the event will take place, the purpose of the event, who will be attending, and if you would like the legislator to participate in any specific way (for example, giving short remarks or participating in a fun hands-on activity in the cafeteria).
- If appropriate, **consider inviting a member of your local press** to cover the event. Notify the legislator's office if there will be press there—elected officials love press exposure!
- Be prepared to have someone on hand to **take photographs**. A picture is worth a thousand words! Share these visibly in press releases, on social media or otherwise.
- Thank your legislator for coming both over social media and through email. If any of the legislator's staff attended, be sure to thank them as well!
- Your legislators and their staff will be more available at certain times throughout the year. **August is usually the best time for legislators to be back in their districts.** However, they can be available at any month during the year between session days. Ask the staffers about the legislator's availability and try to be flexible if possible!



Prioritize National Farm to School Month in October!

- Each October, we celebrate [National Farm to School Month](#)! Thousands of schools, early care and education sites, farms, communities and organizations across the country celebrate farm to school by engaging kids in hands-on learning experiences about food and agriculture, through school gardens and by filling lunch trays with healthy, local ingredients that nourish Pennsylvania kids and support our communities' farmers and growers. This is the perfect time to plan events and invite your legislators.
- Think ahead and use this time to highlight your school community's unique activities. Get the community involved in the planning and execution of your events and then reach out to your legislators and ask them to attend and participate in your activities.
- Though many interactions with legislators happen in Harrisburg, legislators are often looking for opportunities to join their constituents in their districts. Even if you want to simply implement your farm to school activities as you usually do, without a specific event or additional resources, your legislators will likely still be interested in seeing your operation in action!
- If you plan to showcase how you procure and serve local food in your school meals or snacks, be sure to share this with your legislators and ask them to support [PA House Bill 2420, the Keystone Fresh Act](#), which will provide Pennsylvania family farmers with access to school food markets and increase the volume and variety of PA grown food products in K-12 school meals.



Social Media

Social Media is an extremely powerful tool that allows for fast digital communications and advocacy that can be used to advocate for policy, events, and issues. Whether you want to plan an event, raise awareness for the Keystone Fresh Act, or call upon legislators to act, social media allows you to directly engage with elected officials and the community.

Best Practices

- Use Facebook, X, or Instagram, three of the most popular social media sites and the ones most often used by legislators.
- Post on your feed and/or your story to spread awareness. Let your followers know about the Keystone Fresh Act, Farm to School Policy, and what you're doing in your community.
- Use a high quality, colorful photograph or image. Explain what is happening and why it is significant in the caption. You can use a free online platform like Canva to edit photos and easily and quickly design simple graphics, like a photo quote, that you can save to use again later.
- Use hashtags like #KeystoneFreshAct and #farmtoschool so that others can see and promote your posts too. Consider typing up the hashtags you use in social media posts in a word document and save it so you can quickly copy and paste them when you need them!
- Be clear, be funny, be serious, but don't be offensive! While there's often arguments and debate on social media, it's best to not fall for online antagonism. They can be ignored. Farm to School is about enriching our farmers, our students, and our communities.
- Make sure to tag your Representative or Senator, and other relevant policy makers like the Governor or Department of Education or Agriculture!
- It's always a good idea to celebrate public officials' support publicly—tag and thank them for their hard work to make this happen wherever you can.
- Post, post, post! Whether daily, weekly, or monthly. Traction and publicity is important to spread the message.



Endorsements

The PA Farm to School Network
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Pasa Sustainable Agriculture
The School Nutrition Association of PA
PA Cattlemen's Association
Feeding Pennsylvania
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania
The Pennsylvania State Grange
Conservation Voters of PA
Partnership for Better Health
The Food Trust
Philabundance
Pittsburgh Food Policy Council
Just Harvest
The Food Dignity Movement
Chef Ann Foundation
Happy Valley Meat Company
Jefferson Einstein Health
Greener Partners
Allies for Children
York County Food Bank
Adams County Food Policy Council
Westmoreland Food Bank
Wayne County Community Foundation
The Common Market
The GIANT Company
Three Rivers Grown
Moin Halal Meat LLC
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
Wayne Communities Food Alliance
Clarion River Organics
Plant it Forward
Hilltop Urban Farm
Central PA Food Bank
Nutritional Development Services,
Archdiocese of Philadelphia
School District of Philadelphia
Armstrong School District

Seneca Valley School District
Octorara Area School District
UpstreamPgh
Cousins Fresh Market
We The People - Pennsylvania
Buttonwood Farms/Delta School
Spring Grove Area School District
Potter's Farm
Stacey Woodson, LLC
Grow Pittsburgh
Kiddie City Early Learning Center, Inc.
Bellwood-Antis Public Library
Quaker Valley School District
Cheder Menachem Inc
Steelton-Highspire School District
Mount Washington Children's Center
Cocalico School District
Upper Moreland Township School District
Big Spring School District Food Service
Fairview School District
Colonial School District
Central Counties Youth Detention Center
Franco Harris Pittsburgh Center at Penn State
Reinford Farms Inc
Edinboro Market, Inc.
Highlands School District
Northern Lehigh School District
Browns Family Childcare, LLC
Thompson Farms Volant, LLC
Davis Grown
Green Trees Early Learning Center, inc.
Gettysburg Area School District
Pittsburgh Regional Food Service Directors
Forest Hills School District
Kidz Kingdom Early Learning Center
Baytree Farm
Lifespan school & daycare

Connect With Us

If you need help with anything in this toolkit, reach out to pafarmtoschool@thefoodtrust.org and we will happily provide support or answer your questions!

Learn more at [Keystone Fresh Act: PA's Local Food Purchasing Incentive](#)

Additional Resources

Find additional literature and the full memorandum [here](#).

[Keystone Fresh Act Fact Sheet](#)

[Keystone Fresh Act FAQ](#)

[Pennsylvania Department of Education Investigative Report on Local Food Purchasing Incentives](#)

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