Dear X

I think it is essential that all children in poverty should be entitled to a free school lunch because <SUPPORTER GIVES OPTIONAL REASON> I think that free school meals bring positive educational and health benefits, ensuring that disadvantaged children get a nutritious meal each day.

All children whose families receive universal credit should continue to receive free school meals. I do not agree with the introduction of an earnings threshold of £7,400 to determine eligibility for free school meals under Universal Credit. This is for three key reasons:

**1. A million children in poverty will miss out on a free school meal**

Under this proposal, a million children in poverty will miss out on a free school meal and it will be almost entirely children in poverty in working families who miss out. Worth around £400 a year per child, free school meals can represent a substantial proportion of a struggling family's income. In addition, they often entitle children to other support, such as help with school clothing, trips or music lessons.

**2. Free school meals bring crucial educational and health benefits**

There is evidence that eating a healthy school meal improves concentration and classroom behaviour. Another study demonstrated that improved school meals reduced sickness absences and led to better results in English and Science.

**3. It deeply undermines the principle of 'making work pay'**

This proposal deeply undermines the objective that Universal Credit will support families into work, ensuring they are always better off for every hour that they work. In fact, many families will actually end up on a *lower* overall income because of taking on additional work.

To make up for the loss of free school meals, a family with three children currently earning just under the proposed £7,400 earnings limit would need to work more than a day extra every week at the National Living Wage.

Please treat this as my response to question 1 of the Government's consultation on eligibility for free school meals and the early years pupil premium under Universal Credit.

Yours faithfully,

XX