

July 21, 2022

Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chair
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer and Chairwoman Stabenow,

We, the undersigned national anti-hunger, education, nutrition, child advocacy, youth-serving organizations, and others, ask you to include critical child nutrition investments in the upcoming reconciliation package to ensure children maintain access to nutritious meals at school and during the summer. The child nutrition programs have been critical to keeping hunger at bay during the pandemic for millions of children across the country, mitigating the economic, educational, and health impacts of the pandemic. As the 2022-2023 school year approaches, families continue to face increased food costs and schools continue to struggle with supply chain disruptions and increased staffing costs. The following three provisions would help support children, families, and schools in the upcoming school year and beyond.

- **Allow schools to continue offering free meals to all students through the 2022-2023 school year.** The recently passed Keep Kids Fed Act, a bipartisan, bicameral package was an important first step to help avert a summer hunger crisis, support access to childcare meals, and provide additional funding and flexibility needed for school nutrition operations. However, one of the most important waivers was left out. The reconciliation package must finish the job and extend the waivers that allow schools to offer meals to all students free of charge through the 2022-2023 school year.
- **Expand Community Eligibility.** Community eligibility has transformed school breakfast and lunch for children, families, and schools. Eligible schools that adopt community eligibility offer free school breakfast and lunch to all students, which reduces paperwork for schools and families, eliminates unpaid school meal fees, and fuels health and learning. Currently, too many high-need schools are not eligible even though they and their students stand to benefit from community eligibility. For schools that are eligible, the reimbursement structure can keep them from adopting community eligibility. To increase the number of high-need schools that can participate, the reconciliation package should make more schools eligible (by lowering the eligibility threshold from 40% to 25%), increase funding (by raising the multiplier from 1.6 to 2.5), and create a statewide community eligibility option.
- **Create a Nationwide Summer EBT Program.** When schools close for the summer break, millions of families lose access to school meals. The result is increased food insecurity among families with children. The existing summer nutrition programs are designed to replace school meals and often support much-needed summer programming. But the reach of these meals is too low, serving just one child for every seven who count on free or reduced-price school meals during the school year. A nationwide Summer EBT program would provide families an EBT card to purchase food when schools are closed, an approach that has been found to reduce food insecurity and improve nutrition.

We respectfully ask that you include these provisions in the upcoming reconciliation package.

Sincerely,

A Place at the Table

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Advocates for Better Children's Diets
African American Health Alliance
Alliance to End Hunger
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Heart Association
American Muslim Health Professionals
Balanced
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Bread for the World
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Church World Service
Coalition on Human Needs
Common Threads
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Deliverance Children's Ministry, Inc.
EDGE Consulting Partners
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
First Focus Campaign for Children
Feeding America
Food Insight Group
FoodCorps
FoodFinder
Food Research & Action Center
Good Food Collective
HEAR US Inc.
Hunger Free America
Institute for Child Success

Intentional Inquiry
International Dairy Foods Association
International Fresh Produce Association
Islamic Relief USA
Jack Link's Protein Snacks
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
MEANS Database
Migrant Legal Action Program
MomsRising
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Social Workers
National Education Association
National Farm to School Network
National Immigration Law Center
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National PTA
National WIC Association
ParentsTogether Action
Poetry X Hunger
Poligon Education Fund
Project Bread
Recirculating Farms
Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness
Save the Children
School Nutrition Association
SchoolHouse Connection
Share Our Strength
Society of St. Andrew
Solving Hunger, Tusk Philanthropies

Souper Bowl of Caring

Teach for America

Teens for Food Justice

The Arc of the United States

The Common Market

The DoMas Group

The Food Group Minnesota

unBox

Union for Reform Judaism

Wholesome Wave

Women Veterans Interactive Foundation

World Renew

Zakat Foundation of America

ZERO TO THREE