

Sign-On to Combat Child Hunger in Reconciliation

Sending Office: Honorable Mark DeSaulnier
Sent By: Noelle.Gasper@mail.house.gov

DEADLINE TO SIGN: COB Thursday, September 2nd

Dear Colleague:

The pandemic exacerbated the already devastating crisis of child hunger in this country. In Congress and the Administration, we have made strides to help protect students and their families from hunger, but with reconciliation we have an opportunity to make these changes permanent. To help put an end to child hunger, please join us in sending the below letter to Speaker Pelosi and Chairman Scott urging a \$100 billion investment in child nutrition programs and policies in the upcoming reconciliation package.

Please sign on using Quill [here](#). If you have questions, please contact Noelle Gasper in my office at noelle.gasper@mail.house.gov. We hope you will join us in raising up this important priority.

Sincerely,

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

Text of Letter:

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Chairman Scott:

We appreciate and applaud your ongoing commitment to fighting for children and families, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic that has forced so many into hunger and hardship. With many of the policies we enacted to support families set to expire, threatening a hunger cliff for our most vulnerable children, we urge you to include \$100 billion in the Education & Labor Committee's portion of the budget reconciliation package to ensure permanent healthy school meals for all, and EBT benefits for children whose families are low income when school meals are not available. This is a generational opportunity to build upon and maintain the programmatic improvements made during the pandemic and make strides toward a hunger free future for our nation's children.

Thankfully, as you know, we were able to temporarily put in place the provisions in the Universal School Meals Program Act ([H.R. 3115](#)), which helped students across the nation get free school lunches regardless of income. We need to make this change permanent. The [case for permanent healthy school meals for all](#) is clear: research shows that school meals help alleviate food insecurity and poverty while improving educational and overall health outcomes. [Recent survey results](#) from the School Nutrition Association show that school meal program directors across the country reported that serving free

meals to all students during the pandemic increased access, improved equity, and fueled a large decrease in unpaid school meals debt.

Delivering healthy school meals for all students requires supporting our school's infrastructure, ensuring that school kitchens and the nutrition service workforce are properly resourced to provide healthy, nutritious meals to all students across the nation. According to a national survey by Pew Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project, 88 percent of school districts need at least one piece of new kitchen equipment, and 55 percent require infrastructure changes. This investment is vital to ensuring students have access to healthy meals at school. That is why we support the inclusion of the School Food Modernization Act ([H.R. 4379](#)) in the reconciliation package as well.

The pandemic also has highlighted the need for an [Electronic Benefit Transfer \(EBT\)](#) program for families when schools are closed – whether regularly scheduled breaks like Summer or unanticipated disasters like COVID-19. Legislation like the Stop Child Hunger Act ([H.R. 3519](#)) support the benefits that EBT provides to families with low incomes who rely on school meals to make ends meet with the means to purchase food when school meals are not available, preventing hunger and fueling local economic activity.

Evaluations of [Summer EBT](#) and [Pandemic EBT](#) (which provides the value of school meals for families who lost access due to pandemic-related school closures), show that these approaches reduce child hunger among the poorest and [most disenfranchised](#) children, a rare intervention that works best for the families who need it most.

Without action, these policies we worked so hard to put in place will expire, creating a massive hunger cliff for our children. For low-income families, the status quo of child food insecurity prior to COVID was not working –we must use this moment to build a more equitable and hunger-free future.

We urge you to prioritize important investments to strengthen, improve, and invest in the child nutrition programs through a \$100 billion investment in the Education & Labor Committee's contribution to the upcoming budget reconciliation package. Child nutrition provisions included in the [American Families Plan](#) are part of a strong foundation to ensuring children have access to the nutrition they need year-round. Now is our chance to make real change to ensure that no child goes hungry in this nation.

We respectfully request these proposals be given your full and thorough review, and trust that they will receive the serious consideration they deserve. Thank you for taking the time to consider our thoughts on this matter.

Sincerely,

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