

TEN ADVOCACY ACTIONS Pediatricians Can Take to Address Childhood Food Insecurity (Page 1 of 2)

1) WRITE AN OP-ED, BLOG, OR LETTER TO THE EDITOR

These actions are an opportunity to dive deeper on a specific issue while offering an invaluable personal perspective alongside research and policy recommendations. All of these are highly effective ways to communicate a message to the public and lawmakers who regularly read the editorial pages of their local newspapers.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Christina Moellering of the Missouri chapter of AAP had a quest column calling for an increase in SNAP that was published in the Springfield News-Leader.

Dr. Kimberly Montez wrote for the AAP Voices Blog about seeing patients during COVID-19: “While the pandemic has wreaked havoc on everyone’s lives, it has been particularly challenging for low-income families with children — like the families I see every day as a pediatrician in Winston-Salem, N.C.”

2) MEET, BRIEF, CALL, WRITE, OR EMAIL CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Appealing directly to your Members of Congress and their staff allows you to offer expert information on the health and well-being of children and the role of the federal nutrition programs in promoting healthy growth and development.



In response to an AAP action alert asking pediatricians to weigh in with their Members of Congress about the importance of ensuring children can access nutritious foods throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, over 250 AAP members emailed their representatives.

3) TESTIFY BEFORE CONGRESS IN SUPPORT OF KEY FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Offering your expertise during a legislative hearing is an effective strategy to raise awareness of childhood food insecurity and the multiple health and nutrition benefits of the federal nutrition programs.



Olanrewaju Falusi, MD, FAAP, testified on behalf of AAP before the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry about the impact that child nutrition programs, like WIC, have on the health of her patients.

4) TAKE THE SNAP CHALLENGE

Taking the SNAP Challenge allows participants to share their experiences about living on a food budget of about \$29 per week and it adds some personal experience that can buttress advocacy actions for increasing SNAP benefits. For more information, visit [FRAC's SNAP Challenge page](#).



Lewis First, MD, Chief of Pediatrics at Vermont Children’s Hospital and Chair of the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Vermont College of Medicine, took the 3SquaresVT (this is the state’s program name for SNAP) challenge to highlight the problem of childhood hunger.

5) WORK WITH YOUR STATE AAP CHAPTER TO PRIORITIZE FOOD INSECURITY






Elevating the issue of childhood food insecurity as a chapter priority provides a valuable way to connect practitioners to evidence-based opportunities to screen and intervene.



The AAP Michigan Chapter has included access to healthy, nutritious foods as a key component of its Michigan Blueprint for Children. The chapter is advocating at the state level for increasing SNAP and WIC eligibility, promotion, and access as well as expanded SNAP benefits.



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6) SUPPORT FEDERAL, STATE, OR LOCAL LEGISLATION	7) PUSH FOR STATE APPROPRIATIONS	8) SERVE ON A HUNGER TASK FORCE	9) TESTIFY BEFORE A LOCAL BODY	10) EDUCATE THE NEXT GENERATION OF DOCTORS
<p>Supporting legislation allows pediatricians to promote policy changes that are important to addressing food insecurity and improving children's health. It also can provide opportunities to connect with new and interested stakeholder groups.</p> <p> Numerous AAP state chapters signed <u>this letter of support</u> urging Congress to support H.R. 7887 (the Pandemic Child Hunger Prevention Act), which would provide free school meals to all children during the 2020–2021 school year.</p>	<p>Weighing in for increased funding for state anti-hunger efforts helps lawmakers understand the need for adequate funding and resources to safeguard children against food insecurity.</p> <p> In 2019, the AAP Maryland chapter was part of a coalition that successfully advocated for funding for the summer school lunch program. State funding allows summer meal programs to provide outreach to determine the location of eligible students and provide transportation to distribute meals.</p>	<p>By joining a local task force or broader state coalition, pediatricians can add tremendous value to coalition activities and influence goals and priorities.</p> <p> <i>Stephen Cook, MD, of Rochester, New York, was appointed by Governor Andrew Cuomo to the New York Anti-Hunger Task Force. Dr. Cook was appointed due to his tireless advocacy for children's food security, which included testifying before the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and being active on social media in staunch support of SNAP.</i></p>	<p>Engaging with local lawmaking bodies, such as a school board or city council, supports local actions to address childhood food insecurity, including the successful implementation of new local policies.</p> <p> <i>Marsha Raulerson, MD, of Brewton, Alabama, testified before her local school board on the importance of healthy food and the Community Eligibility Provision, which allows high-poverty schools to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students.</i></p>	<p>Educating future doctors bolsters the network of individuals who are capable of addressing food insecurity and effectively advocating for federal nutrition programs.</p> <p> <i>The Carolinas Collaborative, a dual state learning health community between the eight pediatric residency advocacy programs across North Carolina and South Carolina, works to educate trainees on screening and intervening for food insecurity in clinical settings. The collaborative is supported by The Duke Endowment and the AAP CPTI.</i></p>