

Child Nutrition Reauthorization: Feeding Hungry Minds

Feed Hungry Minds . There are millions of hungry children in the United States. Even in California, which grows enough food to feed the whole country, 4.4 million people live in or on the brink of daily hunger; many of them are children. Hunger has its consequences: hungry children cannot learn. Federal Child Nutrition programs – Child and Adult Care Food, WIC, School Breakfast, School Lunch, Summer Food, and Afterschool Snack – already lead the fight. But they can and should do more. The reauthorization of the child nutrition programs in 2003 provides the opportunity to:

► **Increase Academic Success for Hungry Learners**

Good nutrition helps develop cognitive abilities in the preschool years. A child without access to nutritious food starts school at a severe disadvantage. That child also faces ongoing problems of daily school readiness. From school breakfast to summer meals, year-round food through the child nutrition programs is essential to success in the classroom. Here's what Congress can do:

Get Kids Ready for School

- *Fully fund WIC so that pregnant women and young children who qualify have access to nutritious foods.*
- *Include more fruits and vegetables and culturally appropriate foods in the WIC food package, and keep the WIC Farmers' Market Program.*
- *Increase the number of childcare centers and homes that provide meals to low-income children by increasing reimbursement, eliminating the two-tier reimbursement system, and allowing for-profit child care centers to serve CACFP meals.*

Make Sure Kids Can Do Their Best Each School Day

- *Make it easier for low-income children to eat free- and reduced-priced meals.*
- *Boost school breakfast and lunch participation by feeding all children for free in high-need communities.*

► **Feed Kids More, Process Less Paper**

Schools and community-based organizations have trouble navigating the separate, conflicting requirements of child nutrition programs, so they don't operate all of them -- especially when school is out. Thus, many eligible children go hungry, or they only receive meals from one or two programs. Streamlining the programs can feed more hungry children without costing more money or sacrificing program integrity.

- *Allow districts to serve summer meals under National School Lunch Program guidelines.*
- *Eliminate separate requirements in federal nutrition programs for local government agencies and non-profit organizations by allowing these non-school entities to serve meals and snacks year round under one program.*
- *Require all states to directly certify children from families who are receiving TANF and/or food stamp benefits.*

► **Help Kids Prevent Obesity**

The prevalence of overweight among children ages 6 to 17 years has more than doubled since the 1970s. The school meal programs contribute to better nutrition and healthier eating behaviors for children who participate, but foods sold outside of these programs often undermine their nutrition goals.

- *Limit the sale of junk foods in schools.*
- *Address lengths and times of meal periods.*