

Congress has an important opportunity to improve the health of millions of children by passing a strong bill to reauthorize child nutrition programs this year. Successful, cost-effective federal nutrition programs play a critical role in reducing child poverty and helping children access healthy foods while improving their overall health, development, and school achievement.

The U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee's bill, the *Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access Act of 2016*, is an important step forward in keeping child nutrition programs strong for children. The AAP encourages the Senate to pass this bill.

The AAP opposes the current bill in the U.S. House of Representatives, H.R. 5003, the *Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016*, because it would reduce access to free breakfast and lunch for children under the Community Eligibility Provision, endanger our child nutrition programs through a harmful 3-state block grant program, weaken the evidence-based school nutrition standards, and fail to adequately invest in WIC, child care and summer feeding programs. Instead, the AAP urges House members to move forward with a strong, bipartisan child nutrition reauthorization bill that addresses the following:

Early Nutrition

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) fight food insecurity and promote nutrition in early childhood, a critical time period of rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. WIC improves birth outcomes and the health of infants, supports breastfeeding mothers through education and peer support, and connects families to medical care.

AAP calls on Congress to:

- Maintain adjunctive eligibility for WIC with Medicaid so that pregnant women and children will not lose access to WIC.
- Ensure that children older than five who have not started kindergarten (where they can receive healthy meals through the school meals program) do not fall into a nutritional age gap by allowing WIC eligibility through age six.
- Permit WIC to certify infants for up to two years, so that more families can continue receiving the nutritional assistance, nutrition education, and linkages to health care offered by WIC.

School-Based Nutrition

In 2010, Congress made major improvements to the nutrition standards for school meals. Today, 98% of schools are meeting those standards, meaning children are consuming more fruits and veggies, more whole grains, and less sodium.

AAP calls on Congress to:

- Support the compromise reached in the Senate on nutrition standards for school meals.
- Reject any attempt to block grant child nutrition programs, which would compromise the integrity of the programs and their ability to serve all children in need.

Food Insecurity and Child Hunger

One in five children in the U.S. lives in a household where food is scarce, and may experience educational, health and behavioral problems as a result. AAP's new policy statements, *Promoting Food Security for All Children* and *Poverty and Child Health in the U.S.*, encourage all pediatricians to screen for food insecurity and poverty-related risk factors and to refer children in need to key anti-poverty programs like WIC, SNAP, summer food service programs, and school meals.

AAP calls on Congress to:

- Preserve the current eligibility for the successful Community Eligibility Provision that allows schools in high poverty areas to reach even more children with free breakfast and lunch, reducing hunger and maximizing program efficiency.
- Increase access to nutritional assistance in the summer months since only about 16% of children who rely on free or reduced-price school lunch are accessing meals in the summer.

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