

August 24, 2020

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the 126 undersigned organizations, we urge you to support H.R. 7887, the Pandemic Child Hunger Prevention Act. Providing free school meals for all children during the 2020-2021 school year as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic will ensure that all students get two healthy meals every school day regardless of family income and what the new school day structure looks like.

Food insecurity, particularly in children, has only increased during this crisis. The pandemic has shined a bright light on all the fissures in our food and nutrition security systems, particularly for low-income and historically marginalized communities. With growing unemployment, increasing uncertainty surrounding the school year, and rising food insecurity – one in four children are expected to be food insecure due to the pandemic and Black and Hispanic households are twice as likely to be food insecure compared to white families – free school meals for all children gives us a powerful tool to keep kids from going hungry during these unprecedented times. Before the pandemic, school meals were often the only guaranteed meal for millions of children, and free school meals for all children helps keep these services going so a child's access to food isn't dependent on income during a public health and economic crisis.

Given the economic volatility and the massive influx of children who will be eligible for free or reduced-price school meals, free school meals to all children reduces the burden on families and ensures that children who are newly eligible or on the edge of eligibility do not otherwise fall through the cracks. Free school meals for all children also removes the stigma of children participating in the program, provides equitable access to healthy meals, and provides school food service programs the administrative flexibility and a steady budget so they can shoulder through economic downturn and focus on their primary function: feeding children healthy meals.

Under the Pandemic Child Hunger Prevention Act, free meals would be temporarily provided to all students for the 2020-2021 school year through the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program. Since participation in the free and reduced lunch program is often used to identify the number of students from low-income families for Title I funding, schools will still be able to collect the necessary data from direct certification of students. Schools will also be able to use data from either school year 2020-2021 or school year 2021-2022, acknowledging that eligibility rates for additional government assistance programs could fluctuate in the upcoming school year. Finally, the bill addresses other child nutrition programs, such as the Summer Food Service Program, the Summer Seamless Option, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the National School Lunch Program Afterschool Snack Program, to ensure maximum flexibility for school food service programs to continue to feed children.

We know that families are struggling during this public health emergency. Supporting free school meals to all children and the Pandemic Child Hunger Prevention Act ensures that no child will go hungry, and would bring stability and consistency for the children, parents, and school food service professionals as they transition into uncertain school year. We urge you to support H.R. 7887, the Pandemic Child Hunger Prevention Act.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK)
Agri-Cultura Network
Alliance for Local Economic Prosperity
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Pediatrics, Colorado Chapter
American Academy of Pediatrics, Georgia Chapter
American Academy of Pediatrics, Hawaii Chapter
American Academy of Pediatrics, Illinois Chapter
American Academy of Pediatrics, Maryland Chapter
American Academy of Pediatrics, Nevada Chapter
American Academy of Pediatrics, New York State Chapter 3
American Academy of Pediatrics, Tennessee Chapter
American Academy of Pediatrics, Washington Chapter
American Commodity Distribution Association
American Heart Association
American Public Health Association
Arkansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Balanced
Black Farmers & Ranchers New Mexico
Borrego Springs Unified School District
Cajon Valley USD
Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood
Center for American Progress (CAP)
Center for Ecoliteracy
Center for Health Innovation
Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Center for Wellness and Nutrition a program of the Public Health Institute
Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition (WA State)
Children's Council of San Francisco
Children's Defense Fund
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
City Harvest
Coalition for Healthy School Food
Colorado Children's Campaign
Community Food Advocates
Community Health Council of Wyandotte County
Counter Tools

CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute
Dine' Food Sovereignty Alliance
Ehrens Consulting
Escondido Union High School District
Fallbrook Union Elementary School District
Farm to Table - New Mexico
Feeding Kentucky
First Focus Campaign for Children
Florida Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics, Inc.
Florida Impact to End Hunger
Food and Nutrition Services San Diego Unified
Food Research & Action Center
FoodCorps
Foodicine Health, Inc.
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Grossmont Union High School District
Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities
Groundwork NRG
Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic
Healthy Active Oregon Coalition
Healthy Food America
Heaven's Windows
Holmen School District
Kansas Action for Children
KC Healthy Kids
Kitchen Angels
La Mesa-Spring Valley School District
La Semilla Food Center
Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Teachers College, Columbia University
LiveWell Colorado
Local 372/ NYC Board of Education Employees
Lunch 4 Learning Parent Caucus NYC
LunchAssist
Lyon County Food and Farm Council
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
McCune Foundation
MomsRising
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Nurses
National Education Association
National Education Association, New Mexico
National Farm to School Network
National League for Nursing
National PTA
National WIC Association

NC Pediatric Society
New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council
New Mexico Voices for Children
North Carolina Alliance for Health
North County Food Apology Council
NorthWest Initiative
Nutritional Director Mountain Empire Unified School District
Oregon Pediatric Society
Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
Ramona Unified School District
Real Food for Kids
Revolution Foods
RI Healthy Schools Coalition
San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative
San Diego for Every Child
San Diego Hunger Coalition
San Marcos Unified School District
Santee School District
School Nutrition Association of Wisconsin
Sebastopol Farmers Market
SHAPE America - Society of Health and Physical Educators
Social Security Works
Socially Responsible Investment Coalition
Society of State Leaders of Health and Physical Education
South Bay Union School District
Southwest Organizing Project
The Praxis Project
Trust for America's Health
UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity
UnidosUS
Union of Concerned Scientists
United Fresh Produce Association
University of Rhode Island
Upstream Public Health
Urban School Food Alliance
Vista Unified