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May 17, 2016

Representative Duncan D. Hunter
United States House of Representatives
2429 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Oppose the Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016 (H.R. 5003)

Dear Representative Hunter:

On behalf of California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA), I am writing to express our opposition to the "Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016" (H. R. 5003). This bill would hurt children by weakening the child nutrition programs and balancing the cost of any small benefits on the backs of low-income children. H.R. 5003 is unacceptable and CFPA firmly believes that the committee should start over. Here are three critical ways H.R. 5003 hurts children in California:

1. **Limits eligible students' participation in the school meal programs.** Rather than increasing access to the school meal programs, H.R. 5003 would: (a) make hundreds of California schools ineligible for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which enables schools to offer breakfast and lunch free of charge to all students; (b) increase the number of applications that must be verified and alter verification procedures in ways that inevitably would cause eligible students to lose access to free and reduced-price school meals; and (c) limit schools' ability to effectively conduct outreach.
2. **Rolls back progress on school nutrition.** The House bill identifies new criteria that must be considered in establishing nutrition standards. These criteria ultimately undermine student health and are counter to both science and practicality. Furthermore, the bill undermines the intent and nutritional benefits of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program by allowing schools to replace fresh produce with dried (no sugar limit), canned (no sodium or sugar limit), and frozen varieties.
3. **Denies California an opportunity to address summer hunger.** We know that Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (SEBTC) works, but it's not at work in California. SEBTC fights childhood hunger by providing low-income families with nutrition assistance benefits (on an EBT card) to purchase groceries during the summer months when kids lose access to nutritious, affordable school meals. Last year Rep. Susan Davis (CA-53) introduced the Stop Child Summer Hunger Act of 2015, which would have ensured low-income children across the country have access to SEBTC.

Instead, H.R. 5003 limits the reach of Summer EBT for Children: only three states (Michigan, Nevada, and Texas) and the Cherokee and Chickasaw Nations would be eligible to participate.

H.R. 5003 harms California's most vulnerable children. Please consider the importance of the vital child nutrition programs and let me know that I can count on you to oppose H.R. 5003. If you have any questions, please contact me at 510.433.1122 ext. 206 or elyse@cfpa.net.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elyse Homel Vitale". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elyse Homel Vitale, MPH
Senior Advocate
California Food Policy Advocates