



Los Angeles Office
205 S. Broadway
Suite 402
Los Angeles
CA 90012

T: 213.482.8200
F: 213.482.8203
www.cfpa.net

February 1, 2016

Re: Child Nutrition Reauthorization -- Opportunities for Further Improvements

Dear Senators Roberts and Stabenow:

For more than twenty years, California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) has worked to improve the health and well-being of low-income residents throughout our state by improving access to nutritious, affordable food. We are optimistic about many of the program improvements put forward by the Senate Agriculture Committee in the *Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access Act of 2016*. We also recognize opportunities for the bill to go further in improving the reach and positive effects of the federal child nutrition programs across California and the nation at large.

CFPA thanks the Committee for several of the bill's provisions:

- Keeping science-based school nutrition standards largely intact, preserving improvements to fruit, vegetable, and competitive food requirements.
- Investing in the modernization of school food service facilities and equipment by funding grants and establishing a loan program for those purposes.
- Allowing for the reimbursement of an additional snack through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for children in care for nine or more hours per day.
- Providing Summer EBT benefits to low-income households with children.

Building upon the promising foundation laid by these provisions, we ask the Committee to strengthen the bill by:

- **Expanding Summer EBT to substantively reduce hunger and improve nutrition.** Summer EBT is a well-tested strategy that can help close California's persistent summer nutrition gap, which affects nearly two million low-income children across our state. To reach more children in need, the cap on the number of Summer EBT participants should be raised. To allow for the most effective use of benefits, Summer EBT should not be limited to states that have implemented WIC EBT systems. We urge the Committee to incorporate into the bill the President's proposal on Summer EBT as described in his FY 2017 budget.
- **Strengthening existing direct certification requirements and expanding Medi-Cal (Medicaid) direct certification.** We recognize the need to uphold program integrity. In that vein, strengthening and expanding direct certification would improve the accuracy of eligibility determinations, reduce unnecessary paperwork for families and school districts, while increasing access to school meals for eligible children. We urge the Committee to incorporate into the bill the President's recent proposal to allow all states to use Medicaid data to directly certify low income children for school meals.
- **Allowing an additional meal for children in child care for nine or more hours.** While the bill currently authorizes an additional snack for children in care for nine or more hours, it falls short by not allowing a third reimbursable meal. California is home to nearly three million children under the age of six; 24 percent of whom live in poverty. These children -- including those in child care for long hours -- deserve access to nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day.

CFPA is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well being of low income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food.

Finally, we ask the Committee to continue upholding science-based nutrition standards for school meals. Those standards improve student outcomes, supporting optimal health and development. Acknowledging the Committee's bipartisan agreement to reduce the whole grain requirement and delay reductions in sodium, we urge the Committee to maintain the current fruit, vegetable, and competitive food requirements.

Thank you for your consideration and your work to improve the lives of vulnerable children in California and across the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna Colby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anna Colby, MS, MPP
Nutrition Policy Advocate
California Food Policy Advocates

Cc:

Senator Barbara Boxer
Senator Dianne Feinstein