

April 27, 2020

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
U.S. Senate
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Bishop and Hoeven and Ranking Members Fortenberry and Merkley:

Thank you for your diligent work on the COVID-19 relief packages. We appreciate the opportunity to provide a recommendation for the fourth package and thank you in advance for your consideration of the unique situation of school nutrition programs.

As the nation grapples with the impact of COVID-19 disruptions, school nutrition professionals are working on the frontlines to combat rising levels of food insecurity in their communities. School meal programs chose to keep workers employed, deliver meals to students with no additional reimbursement, and expose staff to the coronavirus with little to no funding for proper personal protective equipment. Many maintained fixed expenses such as salaries while taking on unanticipated expenses such as hazard pay and transportation.

School nutrition programs rely on reimbursement from meal service to pay for expenses. Last year between the months of March and June, school nutrition programs served more than 2.5 billion meals and snacks, receiving over \$5 billion in reimbursement. Now according to early reports, programs are serving only a fraction of those meals; this unanticipated loss of revenue has forced programs to tap into fund balances and draw upon lines of credit to sustain their operations. Looking to recovery, it is imperative to support these programs while protecting jobs and limited education resources. Funding must be provided to make programs financially solvent and to maintain the integrity of essential food security programs as the recovery process begins, with many more children relying on school meal programs.

We urge Congress to provide \$2.6 billion to mitigate a portion of the estimated, significant financial loss that school nutrition programs have and will continue to experience. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK)
Advocates for Better Children's Diets
American Heart Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Nutrition
Artisan Grain Collaborative
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Balanced
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Center for Wellness and Nutrition
Council of the Great City Schools
First Focus Campaign for Children
FoodCorps
FoodPlay Productions
Good Food Collective
Healthy Food America
International Foodservice Manufacturers Association
Jacques Pepin Foundation
Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Teachers College, Columbia University
LunchAssist
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
MomsRising
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Nurses
National Athletic Trainers' Association
National Education Association
National Farm to School Network
School Nutrition Association
Share Our Strength
Slow Food USA
Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior
Society of State Leaders of Health and Physical Education
Union of Concerned Scientists
United Fresh Produce Association
Urban School Food Alliance
Wellness in the Schools

CC: Chairman Pat Roberts, Senate Agriculture Committee
Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow, Senate Agriculture Committee
Chairman Bobby Scott, House Education & Labor Committee
Ranking Member Virginia Foxx, House Education & Labor Committee