



2015 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Recommendations

As members of the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA), the organizations below support reauthorization of the child nutrition programs, which are being implemented with success across the country. The nation's child nutrition programs address hunger, poor nutrition, childhood obesity, health care costs, and national security by supporting children's wellbeing and ability to learn and grow into healthy and productive members of society.

Schools and child care programs are making terrific progress in improving school foods, with 95 percent of school districts certified as meeting the updated school lunch standards. Still, more can be done to support schools, parents, children, and communities in ensuring that all kids have access to a healthy start in life.

NANA recommends that Congress reauthorize a child nutrition bill that:

- Supports young children, students, and parents;
- Supports schools, child care programs, and communities; and
- Improves program efficiencies.

Support Students and Parents

- **Healthy School Food.** Maintain science-based nutrition standards for school meals and other foods sold in schools.

Rationale: The foods and beverages sold in schools significantly affect children's diets and weight, with many students consuming more than half of their daily calories at school. NANA supports the process begun under the Bush Administration to align school meals with the age-appropriate scientific recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans that take into consideration the unique needs and effect on local schools. In addition to meals, nearly all students can buy foods and beverages through multiple school locations, including cafeteria a la carte lines, vending machines, and school stores. Since the Truman Administration in the 1940s, school lunch has been a federal program with national nutrition standards. In addition, nearly three-quarters of parents support national nutrition standards for school meals.



Support Schools and Communities

- **Farm to School.** Congress should build on the success of farm to school by strengthening and expanding the program's scope and by providing an additional \$10 million a year in mandatory funding.



Rationale: Increasing annual mandatory funding from \$5 million to \$15 million a year would better meet the high demand and need for this program; provide flexibility to local school districts to include preschools, summer food service program sites, and afterschool programs; incorporate nutrition education as an eligible activity; increase opportunities for tribal schools; and improve participation by beginning, veteran, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Farm to school

activities increase children's consumption of fruits and vegetables; increase market opportunities for farmers, fishers, ranchers, and local food system entrepreneurs; and support community and economic development.

- **Equipment and Infrastructure.** Congress should establish a loan guarantee assistance program within USDA to help schools finance substantial equipment and infrastructure investments. Congress also should include authorization language to provide targeted grant assistance as catalyst funding for smaller kitchen upgrade projects or to purchase high-quality, durable equipment such as commercial ovens, steamers, refrigeration and stoves.

Rationale: Many schools are preparing wholesome, delicious meals despite having inadequate cooking facilities and the right tools. Instead, they rely on costly and inefficient "workarounds" to create meals because their outdated kitchens were designed to do little more than reheat prepackaged items. Today, 88 percent of districts need at least one piece of kitchen equipment and 55 percent need updated infrastructure. Schools need facilities capable of robust and cost-efficient cooking with healthier, fresher ingredients. Congress has addressed this need through appropriations since Fiscal Year 2009, but should include language within the Child Nutrition Act to ensure continued progress.



- **Support School Breakfast.** Congress should increase reimbursement for the School Breakfast Program through cash or the establishment of a USDA Foods (commodity) entitlement.

***Rationale:** The updated school nutrition standards made improvements to the School Breakfast Program, but the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act did not include an increase for breakfast reimbursement. USDA estimates that it costs an additional 27 cents per breakfast to meet the updated school breakfast patterns.*

- **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).** Congress should provide \$10 million to USDA and \$50 million to be distributed to state Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) agencies to successfully implement the updated CACFP meal pattern and increase CACFP participation. It also should increase reimbursement by 10 cents per meal and snack for the Child and Adult Care Food Program.



***Rationale:** Technical assistance and training are needed to support successful implementation of the updated CACFP meal patterns. The funds also should be used to increase CACFP participation, allowing more children to benefit from the healthier CACFP meals. Additional reimbursement would allow child care centers and homes, Head Starts, homeless and domestic violence shelters, and afterschool programs to*

provide more nutritious meals and snacks, allowing them to implement some of the best practices that were suggested, but not required, in the updated CACFP meal pattern, such as switching to whole grain products, offering more fruits and vegetables, and serving fewer fried foods.

- **Nutrition Education.** USDA should identify and assess best practices that states are using to coordinate nutrition education across nutrition assistance programs, such as WIC, Team Nutrition, SNAP-Education, and EFNEP. USDA also should summarize and assess the materials, trainings, and other products developed through Team Nutrition funding and disseminate best practices to schools about how to utilize these resources effectively.

Rationale: Nutrition education and food literacy are critical components to good health and the development of lifelong healthy behaviors. Effective and targeted nutrition education and promotion that is comprehensive, multi-level, and developmentally tailored across the life cycle, and especially during childhood, can have an empowering and positive impact on the health and well-being of Americans. Effective education and promotion strategies in combination and coordination with nutrition assistance programs like school lunch and breakfast, WIC, CACFP and Summer Food Service Program will help to ensure that program participants have the knowledge, skills, and desire to make healthy choices, whether going through the school cafeteria line, purchasing food in the grocery store, corner store or restaurants, or preparing food at home.

Improve Program Efficiencies

- **Decrease Paperwork and Streamline Program Administration.** Adopt a mechanism similar to that currently used for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) that allows schools to identify and address directly with USDA ways to decrease paperwork and streamline the administration of the school meal programs.

Rationale: The existing CACFP mechanism allows program providers to provide direct feedback to USDA and has proven effective for both providers and USDA in identifying and addressing ways to improve program administration. No similar approach currently exists for the school meal programs. This would allow for better direct communication between schools and the USDA and improve program efficiency and effectiveness.



- **Training and Technical Assistance.** USDA should assess the training and technical assistance that states are providing to schools and report to Congress the approaches that each is using to effectively meet the needs of schools in their state to serve children healthy food through school meals, as well as addressing Smart Snacks, professional standards, and local wellness policies, and disseminate best practices.

Rationale: Currently, school food service programs have disparate access to training and technical assistance. Little is known about states' mechanisms and approaches for delivering technical assistance and training to schools. A report would allow Congress, states, and stakeholders to better utilize existing resources and disseminate best practices.

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