



HELP END CHILD HUNGER

By Strengthening Communities' Ability to Reach Kids During the Summer

THE PROBLEM OF CHILD SUMMER HUNGER

When school is out in the summertime, millions of families who rely on the school breakfast and lunch programs no longer have access to meal assistance. Children consume up to 50 percent of their total daily calories at school during the school year. What happens to children whose families don't have the resources to make up that 50 percent on a summer day?

FOOD INSECURITY RATE AMONG HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN



17%
of Households
with Children

In virtually every county in America, children experience hunger at higher rates than the general population. Nationally, seventeen percent of households with children are food insecure and therefore do not always know where they will get their meal. Across Feeding America's national network, food banks have experienced an increase in demand during the summer months, serving many more children than during the school year. For too many children, summer means the lethargy and listlessness that accompany unfilled bellies. It means consuming empty but filling calories that contribute to the nation's childhood obesity problem. No child should go hungry just because school is out.

ONLY A SMALL FRACTION OF CHILDREN ACCESS SUMMER FEEDING PROGRAMS

The USDA's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) represents a strong public-private partnership to help feed low-income children during the summer months. The program leverages the staff and facilities of thousands of charitable organizations across the nation, including food banks. It offers summer feeding and enrichment programs, providing a federal meal reimbursement for healthy meals served and consumed on site. While the SFSP is intended to fill the summer meal gap, it serves just a fraction of those in need. A mere 17% – less than 4 million of the nearly 22 million low-income children eating free or reduced price lunch during the school year – are accessing a summer feeding program, leaving millions of children unserved.

Many low-income children have trouble accessing a summer feeding site. Some children are too young to walk to sites or are unable to travel across highways or through high crime areas while their parents are at work. Families may have to travel long distances to reach the nearest program, and the roundtrip fuel cost may outweigh the cost of the lunch their child receives. Some community providers struggle to find a feeding site location that is safe and accessible to the children in need. Even as community providers have implemented innovative models under the SFSP, they are still unable to access all low-income food insecure children because of limitations within the program that prohibit the use of proven and tested delivery models.

Reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act provides an important opportunity to strengthen the child feeding programs. Congress can ensure more children can get the meals they need to grow and thrive over the summer by pursuing the following two-pronged strategy that makes it easier for communities to establish summer feeding sites in underserved areas and also gives states the flexibility to reach kids in alternate ways.

STRENGTHEN SUMMER FEEDING SITES

- **Streamline regulations for community-based providers so that they can feed children year-round.**

Currently, community-based organizations like food banks and other nonprofits have to operate the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to provide meals during the summer and after school. Allowing organizations to operate the SFSP year-round would eliminate duplicative administrative processes and ensure that more organizations are able to focus on feeding kids.

- **Align the area eligibility requirement for summer feeding and educational programs to allow more learning programs to offer meals in the summer.**

Reducing area eligibility from 50 percent of area children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals to 40 percent would allow more community providers to offer meals in the summer.

Action: Support the Summer Meals Act of 2019 S.1908 from Senators Gillibrand (D-NY) and Murkowski (R-AK) and H.R.2818 from Reps Young (R-AK) and Larsen (D-WA)

ALLOW ALTERNATE STRATEGIES TO REACH UNSERVED CHILDREN

- **Provide a grocery card to low-income families with children during the summer months to supplement their household food budgets.**

In the summer months, many families are left struggling to stretch already limited food budgets even further when they no longer receive meal assistance from school. In fact, one study shows that low-income families spend an additional \$300 dollars on groceries during the summer months.

From 2011-2014, the USDA tested pilot projects at 14 sites across the country, providing low-income families who qualify for free or reduced-priced school meals with a summer supplemental SNAP card. At participating sites, food insecurity among children dropped by almost one third and children ate more healthfully, consuming more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and dairy products, and fewer sugar-sweetened beverages.

Action: Support the Hunger-Free Summer for Kids Act of 2019 S.1918 from Senators Boozman (R-AR), Leahy (D-VT), McConnell (R-KY), Bennet (D-CO), Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Brown (D-OH), and Hoeven (R-ND) and Stop Child Summer Hunger Act of 2019 S. 1941 from Senator Murray (D-WA) and H.R. 3378 from Representative Davis (D-CA)

- **Allow kids to consume meals off-site, which would enable communities to adopt innovative program models to reach children who lack access to a summer feeding site.**

During the summer, kids are dispersed. Some are at day camps or other enrichment programs. But many others are at home being looked after by older siblings, a neighbor or grandparent, and are harder to reach through a single, site-based delivery model. Our communities could protect far more children from hunger if community providers were allowed to send meals home with children or to deliver meals to families in rural communities.

From 2011-2013, the USDA tested pilot projects in six states where community providers sent children home with backpacks of meals for when the site was not open, or delivered meals to rural communities who otherwise couldn't access a traditional summer feeding site. In areas where the site-based model simply is not viable, alternate models that allow communities to operate a meal delivery program or have families pick up meals and take them home can ensure more children access nutrition support during the summer months.

Action: Support the Hunger-Free Summer for Kids Act of 2019 S.1918 from Senators Boozman (R-AR), Leahy (D-VT), McConnell (R-KY), Bennet (D-CO), Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Brown (D-OH), and Hoeven (R-ND)