



## Child Nutrition Priorities

### SUMMARY

Feeding America food banks play a critical role in advocating for and directly supporting child nutrition programs. As the Congress prepares to reauthorize and strengthen these programs, our food banks are actively engaged in the process of developing proposals for legislative changes that will move the nation forward in the crusade to end childhood hunger in America. President Obama's commitment to achieving this goal by the year 2015 argues for a substantial new investment in child nutrition and we strongly urge the Congress to provide an additional \$20 billion over five years to make improvements to these programs so that all children will have access to a safe, nutritious, and healthy diet.

Our child nutrition priorities are designed to: (1) strengthen the quality and efficiency of all child nutrition programs; (2) fill the gaps in food service for millions of low-income children, and (3) offer creative ideas for new and innovative approaches to ending childhood hunger.

High on our priority list are proposals to reach more needy children through the Summer Food Service and Child and Adult Care Food Programs (SFSP & CACFP). Too many low-income children receiving free or reduced price school lunches during the school year (some 18 million) do not have access to the SFSP, which reaches only 2 million children. Moreover, as the economy worsens, more afterschool program operators are unable to offer enough food to hungry children to satisfy their needs, and too many children are going hungry during weekends and school holidays. The Feeding America food banks operating or hoping to operate summer food and afterschool programs, kids cafes, and weekend food box (or Backpack) programs strongly urge the Congress to make the following program improvements.

### **Afterschool and Child Care Nutrition (Child and Adult Care Food Program)**

- **Expand supper funding for At-Risk After-School Programs** beyond the current 14 states and localities (CT, DC, DE, IL, MD, MI, MO, NV, NY, OR, PA, VT, WI & WV) to all 50 states.
- **Reduce the area eligibility threshold for At-Risk After-School Programs** from 50% of children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals down to 40%.
- Provide child care centers and home day cares with the option of providing a third meal.
- Provide funding for outreach to recruit new sponsors to participate in CACFP.
- Increase funding for CACFP expansion grants.
- Require the publication of a CACFP manual to help applicants and program sponsors.

### **Weekend Nutrition (The Backpack Program)**

- **Create a Pilot Program to fund a series of projects to explore various methods for providing food to children of low-income families on weekends and extended school holidays.** Require that Backpack Programs be included as a model for one or more of the pilots and include funding for a USDA evaluation.
- Provide authority for schools to designate Fruit and Vegetable Program purchases for distribution through Weekend box or Backpack Programs.



### **Summer Nutrition (The Summer Food Service Program; Rural Summer Initiatives)**

- **Reduce the area eligibility threshold for SFSP** from areas where 50% of children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals to areas where 40% are eligible.
- **Expand the California SFSP pilot**, which authorized use of the SFSP program year round, to more or all states, with the provision that meals may be served afterschool year round to reduce need for separate program applications and criteria for summer and CACFP afterschool programs.
- **Increase the percentage of second meals that sponsors may be reimbursed for** to recognize the variable nature of attendance in the summer and the need to reduce food waste.
- **Provide outreach funding** to get new *sponsors/sites/participants* into the SFSP program by, among other things, providing funding for USDA and/or states to develop and implement aggressive outreach programs to get more *children* into summer food programs, and offering Start-up grants for new SFSP sponsors to encourage them to begin new programs
- **Raise or eliminate the restrictions on non-profit sponsors** on the number of operating sites and participants they may serve.
- **Create a series of pilot programs to explore innovative methods of reaching more children through the SFSP in rural areas**; include funding for USDA to conduct evaluation of pilot methods. Ideas include:
  - **Funding for mobile meal programs.**
  - **Creation of a commodity box program pilot**, targeted to children in rural areas that are not served through traditional congregate meal programs. Operated through schools, government, or non-profit agencies using school meals data to identify need, with option of picking up a box of items containing the equivalent to meals received through the SFSP.

### **In-School Nutrition (National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program)**

- **Expand the School Breakfast Program to more schools and more children** by increasing school options and incentives for providing breakfasts at schools; including in-classroom breakfast options and allowing universal school breakfasts in targeted schools with high percentages of low-income students.
- **Expand the “free” meal category for school meals from 130% to 185% of poverty**, resulting in the elimination of the “reduced price” meal category.
- **Improve the nutritional quality** of meals served in schools and of foods available on the school campus.

### **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**

- Ensure adequate funding to serve the growing caseload of women, infants, and children receiving WIC food packages and participating in the accompanying nutrition services.

### **Cross-Program Child Nutrition Initiatives**

- **Increase base reimbursement rates** for all child nutrition programs (school meals, CACFP, SFSP, etc.) to cover the higher meal costs due to inflation and improved nutritional quality.
- **Provide for more frequent indexing** of reimbursement rates for all child nutrition programs. For example, provide semi-annual indexing and round up rates (currently rounded down).