

Highlights: Improving Nutrition for America's Children Act

The House Bill for Child Nutrition Reauthorization

What's in the bill:

The Improving Nutrition for America's Children Act, the House Education and Labor Committee's bill for Child Nutrition Reauthorization, takes several steps forward to ensure that low-income children can participate in the child nutrition programs and receive the meals they need, including:

- Supporting improvements to direct certification for school meals;
- Providing competitive grant funds to promote the expansion of the School Breakfast Program;
- Creating new paperless options for universal school meals;
- Lowering area eligibility for Summer Food to 40 percent in rural areas;
- Creating state pilots that make it easier for schools and community-based organizations to provide meals to children after school, on weekends, and during school holidays;
- Adding, in some states, an additional meal or snack for children who are in child care for over eight hours in some states; and
- Enhancing the nutritional quality of food served in school-based and preschool settings.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE HOUSE BILL

Out-of-School Time Nutrition Program Provisions

- **Lowers area eligibility for Summer Food to 40 percent in rural areas.** The current threshold is 50 percent in all areas.
- **Creates a year-round program through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in 10 states.** Community-based and local government agencies (not including schools) will be able to serve children year-round through SFSP. Eligible sponsors can provide children up at a meal and snack after school, on weekends, holidays, and school vacations at sites eligible for SFSP.
- **Creates an afterschool supper program through the National School Lunch Program in five states.** Currently, the only way that schools can provide a supper afterschool is through the Child Adult Care Food Program, which creates unnecessary paperwork that keeps many schools from participating.
- **Eliminates the requirement that private nonprofit Summer Food sponsors serve no more than 25 sites with no more than 300 children at any of the sites unless the sponsor receives a waiver.**
- **Requires school food authorities to coordinate with Summer Food sponsors** on developing and distributing Summer Food outreach materials.

School Nutrition Program Provisions

Supports new paperless options for universal meal service. Allows schools in high-poverty areas to offer free meals to all students without collecting paper applications, which will expand access to more children and reduce administrative burdens on schools. The reimbursement levels will be based either on Census Data, a community survey, or the level of direct certification in each school building.

Improves direct certification.

- Authorizes the use of Medicaid for direct certification, with a gradual phase-in nationwide over 10 years.
- Provides performance awards to states that show substantial improvement or outstanding performance in direct certification of eligible children.

- Requires improvement plans for states that fail to meet performance expectations for direct certification.

Strengthens policies to prevent overt identification of low-income children.

- Reasserts that children eligible for free or reduced-price meals cannot be physically segregated or discriminated against, or overtly identified by special tokens, tickets or other means.
- Clarifies that children eligible for free meals may not be denied a meal regardless of previous unpaid meal fees.
- Requires schools to attempt to directly certify children whose families are behind in payments for school meals, and if not successful, provide them with another application.
- Requires a study of current state and local policies and practices with recommendations for national standards.

Enhances school nutrition quality.

- Adds a performance-based increase in the federal reimbursement rate for school lunches (six cents per meal) to help schools meet new meal standards for healthier school meals.
- Gives the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to establish national nutrition standards for all foods sold on the school campus throughout the extended school day, including the time before and after school.
- Provides funding for states to carry out nutrition education and wellness promotion activities, including the promotion of student participation in the school meal programs.
- Provides competitive grants for farm-to-school programs.
- Strengthens Local School Wellness Policies by providing the Secretary authority to oversee local wellness policies to promote improved implementation and transparency, and requiring opportunities for public input.
- Allows only lower-fat milk options to be served, as recommended in the Dietary Guidelines.
- Restores dried fruit as part of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.
- Improves school food safety through enhanced requirements, improved recall procedures and additional training for food service staff.

Strengthens school food financing provisions.

- Ensures that schools are correctly accounting for the costs accrued to school food service for providing on-reimbursable foods and charging prices accordingly.
- Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to provide guidance on allowable charges to school food service accounts to prevent inappropriate school expenses that are not related to the school meal programs from draining school meal resources.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Provisions

[Download the in-depth CACFP summary \(pdf\).](#)

Promotes good nutrition, health and wellness in child care.

- Revises the nutrition standards for meals, snacks and beverages served through CACFP to make them consistent with the most recent U.S. Dietary Guidelines.
- Provides education and encouragement to participating child care centers and homes to provide children with healthy meals and snacks and daily opportunities for physical activity, and to limit screen time.
- Increases USDA training, technical assistance and educational materials available to child care providers, helping them to serve healthier food.
- Directs USDA, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, to develop a program to recognize high performing states, sponsors, child care centers and homes promoting nutrition and wellness.

- Provides \$5 million a year for five years for USDA to award competitive CACFP health and wellness grants.
- Launches an ongoing study of the nutrition and wellness practices in child care settings.

Adds the option of serving an additional meal or snack to children who are in child care for over eight hours in up to five states, providing CACFP support to provide the full complement of meals young children need in a long day based on the best nutrition and child development science.

Enhances program reimbursements by \$5 per home to support CACFP sponsoring organizations in their efforts to sustain family child care providers participation in the food program.

Reduces paperwork, simplifies program requirements, and supports oversight.

- Eliminates the block claim requirement completely.
- Allows providers to facilitate the return of participating children's family income forms and allows permanent operating agreements and renewable applications.
- Continues the USDA working group to reduce paperwork and improve program administration and requires USDA to report the results to Congress.
- Establishes a simplified method of determining sponsor monthly administrative funding.
- Allow sponsors more flexibility to use their funds effectively from one fiscal year to the next.
- Enhances and supports CACFP oversight and auditing.
- Allows the use of high school and middle school free and reduced priced school lunch participation levels to determine Tier 1 area eligibility for family child care homes which could reduce paperwork.
- Requires the federal-state agreement to make clear the expectation that the federal funds provided to operate the Child Nutrition Programs be fully utilized for that purpose and that such funds should be excluded from state budget restrictions or limitations, including hiring freezes, work furloughs and travel restrictions.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Provisions

- **Allows state WIC agencies the option to certify children for up to one year.** (The current requirement is six months.)
- **Promotes breastfeeding** by expanding the collection of WIC breastfeeding data and creating performance bonuses for state agencies with high rates of breastfeeding.
- **Mandates WIC electronic benefit transfer (EBT) implementation nationwide.**
- **Allows state WIC agencies to permit local WIC agencies to share WIC nutrition education materials with CACFP institutions** at no cost if a written materials sharing agreement exists between the relevant agencies.

Other Child Nutrition Provisions

- **Provides \$10 million to conduct research into causes and consequences of hunger** and to develop demonstration projects to end childhood hunger, including to enhance SNAP/Food Stamp benefits, to enhance or provide innovative delivery models in school meals, afterschool snacks, and CACFP, and to target federal, state, and local assistance (such as housing assistance or family preservation services) to households experiencing hunger or food insecurity.
- **Provides \$50,000 for State Childhood Hunger Challenge Grants.** These competitive grants could be used by Governors of States to develop demonstration projects to end childhood hunger.
- **Authorizes funding for a commodity program to serve children on weekends and holidays.**

