



# 2024 Federal Priorities: Child Nutrition Reauthorization

## BOLD STRATEGIES TO FIGHT CHILD HUNGER

No child should ever go hungry. Yet far too many California children continue to face food insecurity, which has been exacerbated by severe health and economic effects of the pandemic and unprecedented food inflation: 27% of California households with children are food insecure, with deep disparities for Black (32%) and Latine (34%) families.

### Critical Child Nutrition Investments are Needed

California made history by becoming the first state in the nation to enact healthy school meals for all, ensuring all children can receive two meals at school at no cost that are free of shame, stigma, and school meal debt.<sup>2</sup>

We applaud Congress for allocating funds and providing the opportunity for states to enroll in the new permanent Summer EBT (SUN Bucks) program, a longtime California priority. Summer EBT is a crucial, for ensuring children have reliable, year-round access to nourishing meals. However, the end of Pandemic EBT and SNAP Emergency Allotments cut a third of the federal nutrition safety net.

Investments in child nutrition should never come at the expense of SNAP.<sup>3</sup> The 117th Congress enacted Summer EBT, but offset the cost of this historic expansion by ending SNAP Emergency Allotments prematurely, precipitating a hunger cliff for 5 million Californians, including 1.8 million children.<sup>4</sup> Congress must fight to strengthen the safety net, build on key advances enacted during COVID-19, and protect the nutrition programs that ensure the wellbeing of our children.

### Key Legislation fo Advance a Hunger-Free Future for All Children

- » **Universal School Meals Program Act** (H.R. 3204 Omar / S. 1568 Sanders)
  - › Provides school breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students
  - › Increases school meal reimbursement to match USDA's 2019 study recommendations
  - › Provides up to three meals and a snack for young children in childcare
- » **School Meals Expansion Act** (H.R. 2567 McGarvey)
  - › Advances school meals for all nationwide, with outsized impact in California
  - › Increases the multiplier for federal reimbursement from 1.6 to 2.5
- » **No Hunger Kids in Schools Act** (H.R. 3112 Porter and Aguilar)
  - › Creates a statewide Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) option to prevent child hunger and support schools
- » **Healthy Meals Help Kids Learn Act** (H.R. 1269 McGovern / S. 3093 Heinrich)
  - › Permanently increases the federal reimbursement level for all free, reduced-price, and paid-rate school meals
- » **Expanding Access to School Meals Act** (H.R. 3113 Porter)
  - › Eliminates reduced-priced breakfast and lunch, sets poverty level for free lunch to 200% of FPL
  - › Permanent direct certification for children receiving Medicaid benefits
  - › Increase of CEP Multiplier to 2.5
- » **The School Hunger Elimination Act**, which is being introduced by Sens. Casey and Sen. Fetterman (D-PA).
  - › Increases federal funding for community eligibility schools and creates a statewide community eligibility option
  - › Provides retroactive reimbursement for meals served to children

*“Kids — [when] they're hungry, you can't actually veto the idea to give them food. So that is why most of our expenses are actually going to groceries, when the benefits ended. And that is one of the reasons why I actually got a second job.” –CalFresh Recipient*

## Bold Strategies to Prevent Hunger During Summer & Out of School Time

### » Stop Child Hunger Act ([H.R. 4379](#) Levin and Hayes)

- › Provides EBT food aid during other school closures including disasters or other breaks
- › Increases federal funding for administrative costs from 50% to 100%
- › Increases benefits from current \$40 per month to \$160 per month

» **Summer Meals Act** ([H.R. 9406](#) Larsen, Peltola, and Smith) Allow nonprofits to feed kids all year using the Summer Food Service Program, instead of switching between Summer Food and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

- › Improves area eligibility for Summer Meal sites to address barriers to food access.
- › Allows sites to provide three meals a day during the summer.
- › Provides grants for transportation to reach underserved areas.

## Expand Food Access for our Youngest Children

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) plays a vital role in stabilizing childcare infrastructure and supporting parents' ability to return to work. Yet meals and snacks remain out of reach for too many; only 38% of childcare programs participate in CACFP.

### » Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act ([H.R. 6067](#) Bonamici)

- › Allows an additional meal or snack for children in a full day of care
- › Improves reimbursement rate adjustments for childcare home providers
- › Streamlines participation by moving to annual eligibility for proprietary childcare centers
- › Maximizes technology to eliminate overly burdensome and outdated paperwork

### » Child Care Nutrition Enhancement Act of 2023 ([H.R. 5569](#) Landsman / [S. 3294](#) Casey)

- › Increases reimbursement rate for providers and sponsors by 10 cents
- › Eliminates 2 tier system & different reimbursement -Center based & Family Child Care
- › Reimburses meals that Family Child Care provides to their own children

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides pregnant and postpartum mothers, infants, and young children access to nutritious foods, nutrition education, and breastfeeding support. WIC serves one million Californians, yet our program fails to reach all young children in need.

### » Wise Investment in Children Act ([H.R. 3364](#) DeLauro / [S.1604](#) Casey)

- › Extends postpartum eligibility to two years and children to age 6
- › Extends infant certification periods to two years

### » Modern WIC Act ([H.R. 2424](#) Fitzpatrick / [S. 984](#) Gillibrand)

- › Avoids access cliff: permanently allow remote certifications by video or phone
- › Promotes greater collaboration with healthcare providers
- › Allows remote benefit issuance through EBT technology

California continues to lead through our historic School Meals for All, and our commitment to maximize Summer EBT. Congress can reinforce this leadership federally by:

- › Providing adequate time to eat school meals
- › Opposing any efforts to block stronger school meal nutrition standards
- › Allowing for a second entree to be served to older students when nutritionally appropriate
- › Ensuring two meals are provided on shortened school days
- › Strengthening Summer EBT benefits

## Contacts:

Itzul Gutierrez: [itzul.gutierrez@cafoodbanks.org](mailto:itzul.gutierrez@cafoodbanks.org)

Elyse Homel Vitale: [elyse@ccfprounatable.org](mailto:elyse@ccfprounatable.org)

Kevin Aslanian: [kevin.aslanian@ccwro.org](mailto:kevin.aslanian@ccwro.org)

Sarah Diaz: [sdiaz@calwic.org](mailto:sdiaz@calwic.org)

Angeles Nelson: [angeles@nourishca.org](mailto:angeles@nourishca.org)

Andrew Cheyne: [andrewcheyne@grace-inc.org](mailto:andrewcheyne@grace-inc.org)

Keely O'Brien: [kobrien@wclp.org](mailto:kobrien@wclp.org)



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