



Washington
Child Nutrition
Reauthorization
Coalition

Child Nutrition Reauthorization Talking Points and FAQs

Background

The federal Child Nutrition Act is reauthorized every 5 years or so. The last reauthorization happened in 2004.

The bill funds critical programs that ensure our infants and children have proper nutrition where they live, learn and play, including: WIC, School Lunch and Breakfast, Summer and Afterschool Meals and Snacks and Child Care feeding programs.

Historically this bill has passed with strong bipartisan support (including unanimous consent in both houses in 2004).

The Senate version of the reauthorization, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, was introduced by Senator Blanche Lincoln (D, AR), Chair of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee. The House bill, the Improving Nutrition for America's Children Act of 2010, was introduced by Rep. George Miller (D, CA), Chair of the House Education and Labor Committee.

In this year's reauthorization, advocates are calling for strengthening Child Nutrition Act programs by \$10 billion over 10 years. Neither current bill meets this needed level of investment in our children; however, the House bill is stronger on summer and afterschool meals, and school breakfast.

Washington's coalition working for a strong Child Nutrition Reauthorization has three priorities for improving these programs:

- Improving access to the programs
- Modernizing enrollment and administration
- Improving nutritional quality

The Case for \$10 Billion: Health, Education, Economy and National Security

Every day in the United States, some 17 million children are hungry because they don't have enough food at home. In Washington state, we have at least 377,000 hungry kids. We call on Congress to make it a top priority to feed our children where they live, learn and play by investing an additional \$10 billion over 10 years as a part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION AND EDUCATION

- We also know that hungry kids cannot learn in the classroom, whether they're in kindergarten or high school. They cannot sit still and focus. They cannot retain information as well. Ultimately, underfed children cannot reach their full potential in school. Often, a child's hunger manifests itself in behavioral and social problems in school.
- For too many very low-income children, the food they get through school and summer feeding programs may be their only nutritious meals on any given day.
- Strengthening our school and summer feeding programs and improving the nutritional quality of meals served will reduce barriers to learning in the classroom and help fuel greater educational achievement throughout our children's lives .

CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION AND HEALTH CARE COSTS

- Adequate nutrition provided through WIC is critically important for expectant mothers and their developing newborns and infants. WIC has also been proven to save an estimated \$3 in health care costs for every \$1 invested.
- Obesity puts people of all ages at risk for greater health problems, including:
 - Heart disease (including hypertension) and diabetes later on in life
 - Cancer, infertility, respiratory diseases such as asthma, chronic musculoskeletal problems, and more.
- Obesity also strains our health care system and contributes to the astronomical level of spending on health care in this country. We spend almost \$150 billion in weight-related medical costs per year. If obesity rates continue to rise, obesity-related health costs will exceed \$344 billion by 2018.
- Increasing evidence suggests that expanding participation in federal nutrition programs supports healthy eating and prevents obesity.

CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION AND THE ECONOMY

- Just like food stamps, child nutrition programs put dollars straight into local economies and act as some of the best, most effective means of local economic stimulus we have.
- WIC vouchers have to be spent at the grocery store, on specific items, and in a certain time period. Last year over \$130 million in WIC dollars were spent in local Washington grocery stores, while another \$800 million went to local small farmers through the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program.
- Schools and other organizations fuel local economies with their purchases to prepare meals for kids. Spent locally, these dollars not only support Washington farmers, but also

help local stores pay employee salaries and allow vendors and distributors to get more food to the store.

- Workers who suffered hunger as children and struggled in school are not well prepared to perform effectively in the contemporary work force because of lower educational levels and technical skills.
- Because hungry and undernourished kids have weaker immune systems and are more susceptible to illness, parents also miss more work days due to child sick days.
- Since improving childhood nutrition will help improve educational achievement, which we know is linked to higher-wage jobs, investing in children now will reap our economy major dividends in the future.

CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION AND NATIONAL SECURITY

- Today, 75 percent of 17- to 24-year-olds do not meet the basic standards required for military service.
- A recent report authored by 90 retired military leaders titled [*Ready, Willing, and Unable to Serve*](#) notes that two of the biggest reasons for this startling statistic are lack of a high school diploma and obesity.
- As discussed above, Child Nutrition Act programs play a vital role in improving children's health and educational achievement, both of which in turn have a very real impact on our national security.

Conclusion

Childhood hunger and obesity in this country threaten the future health of our population, our economy and our national security. We have a responsibility to ensure all our kids are getting the nutritious food they need to be healthy and reach their full potential in the classroom and beyond.

We call on Congress to make it a top priority to feed our children where they live, learn and play by investing an additional \$10 billion over 10 years as a part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the current level of funding for Child Nutrition? Are we asking for a significant increase in spending or a more modest increase over current levels?

- Spending in 2009 for the program included in Child Nutrition Reauthorization totaled roughly \$22 billion.

- Investing an additional \$1 billion per year, or \$10 billion over 10 years, constitutes a significant increase but less than 10% of current annual spending.

Explain more about the connection between poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and obesity. How can kids be hungry *and* obese? How can kids be malnourished *and* obese? How many kids are obese in Washington state? Do we know how many are obese and experience hunger and/or malnourishment?

Factors contributing to obesity are often similar to factors contributing to childhood hunger:

- **Limited resources and lack of access to healthy, affordable foods, especially in low-income communities and communities of color**
 - Lack of full-service grocery stores and farmers' markets
 - Higher prices for healthy food
 - Lower quality of healthy food – especially fresh produce
 - Greater presence of fast food restaurants
- **Fewer opportunities for physical activity**
 - Dearth of gyms, swimming pools and other options for physical activity
 - Less attractive resources for physical activity, such as run down parks, neglected playfields
 - Barriers such as crime, traffic, and unsafe playground equipment
 - Less time for activity during PE classes or recess at school
- **Cycles of food deprivation and overeating**
 - Chronic ups and downs in food intake
 - Unhealthy preoccupation with food
 - Metabolic changes that promote fat storage
- **High levels of stress** (from food insecurity, low-wage work, lack of access to health care, inadequate transportation, poor housing, violence)
 - Hormonal and metabolic changes for malnourishment and hunger
 - Unhealthy eating behaviors (chronic ups and downs in food intake)
 - Anxiety and depression
 - Parents – primarily mothers – may restrict their food intake and sacrifice their own nutrition to protect their children from hunger.
- **Greater exposure to obesity-related marketing**
 - Fast food
 - Sugar-sweetened drinks
- **Limited access to health care**
 - Lack of diagnosis
 - Lack of treatment

How will strengthening Child Nutrition fight obesity?

- Increasing participation in federal nutrition programs is one of the healthy eating and physical activity strategies recommended by the Institute of Medicine's report *Local Government Actions to Prevent Childhood Obesity*.
- Federal nutrition programs have defined standards, and provide low-income kids with foods that are generally of higher nutritional quality than...
 - what food is available without these programs, or
 - what food is in the homes of families that don't receive support from these programs, or
 - what food kids choose for themselves outside of these programs.
- "We also find that subsidized meals at school or day care are beneficial for children's weight status, and we argue that **expanding access to subsidized meals may be the most effective tool to use in combating obesity in poor children.**" Source: Kimbro & Rigby, 2010

How many children in Washington do the various Child Nutrition Programs serve?

- National School Lunch: Over 500,000 students in Washington eat school lunch on an average day; 300,000 of these students receive subsidized meals.
- School Breakfast: 154,000 students ate school breakfast on an average day in 2008; 126,000 of these students receive a subsidized breakfast.
- Child and Adult Care Feeding Program: 86,000 young children receive meals in child care centers and family child care homes.
- Summer Food Service Program: About 32,500 children received a summer meal on an average day last July.
- WIC: 165,000 women, infants and children received support from the WIC program in 2008.

Where did the national security information come from?

- A recent report called *Ready, Willing and Unfit to Serve* by Mission: Readiness, a bipartisan, nonprofit organization of senior retired military leaders. The report can be found online at www.missionreadiness.org

What can we do to help?

- Feature effective child nutrition programs in your newspaper; we can help you identify programs in your area that work.
- Publish an editorial highlighting the key role child nutrition programs play in addressing both childhood hunger and obesity, and the opportunity Congress has this year to improve the program.
- Ask your food editor to interview the child nutrition director at your local school district about the role school meals play in the lives of children, the complexities of balancing limited funding with providing nutritious meals, etc.
- If your local paper's editorial board is interviewing your members of Congress, include questions about Child Nutrition Reauthorization and their views on increasing funding for these essential programs.

Members of the Washington Child Nutrition Reauthorization Coalition:

Children's Alliance

Food Lifeline

Northwest Harvest

Nutrition First

School's Out Washington

Solid Ground/Seattle Food Committee

Washington Association for the Education of Young Children

June 14, 2010

For more information, contact Linda Stone at the Children's Alliance

linda@childrensalliance.org or (509) 747-7205