

# Feeding America's 2022 Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) Priorities

Fact Sheet | April 2022



**In almost every county in the United States, children experience food insecurity at higher rates than the general population.**

**Right now, nearly 12 million children struggle to know where their next meal will come from.**

Child nutrition programs play a critical role in safeguarding millions of children from hunger — but the programs are only as effective as their ability to reach children in need. **Our lawmakers must pass Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) legislation that strengthens those programs, especially during out-of-school times when children are hard to reach.**

## Congress Can Strengthen Child Nutrition Programs Through CNR

Child nutrition programs target children from families with low incomes at different ages and in different settings to reduce hunger and promote nutrition. WIC reaches children from birth to preschool, while school breakfast and lunch programs serve school-aged children. Food banks and other nonprofits operate summer, afterschool, and weekend programs to make sure children have nutritious food when school is out.

Those cost-effective programs provide quality nutrition, childcare, and educational activities while improving health, development, and academic achievement.

**Through CNR, Congress can strengthen the child nutrition programs – improving the health, nutrition, and well-being of millions of children across the country.**

Congress should improve program access, ensure nutrition quality, and simplify program administration and operation.



## Strengthen Summer Feeding Sites

■ **Streamline regulations for community-based providers so they can feed children year-round:** Right now, community-based organizations like food banks and other nonprofits have to switch between operating the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to provide meals during the summer and after school. Congress can allow organizations to operate SFSP all year to eliminate duplicative administrative processes and ensure 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:** The area eligibility test works best in population-dense areas. In suburban and rural areas where children travel greater distances to get to school or in areas with greater socioeconomic diversity, communities may have a large number of children in need but fail to meet the area eligibility test. Reducing the area eligibility threshold 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. This change would reduce sponsors' paperwork, grow participation, and increase focus on site enrichment activities and nutritious meals. More programs offering meals in the summer means more children receiving meals closer to home.

## What's CNR?



CNR is the process Congress uses to update child nutrition programs, including the School Breakfast Program (SBP), National School Lunch Program (NSLP), summer and afterschool nutrition programs, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).



CNR generally occurs every 5 years, but Congress has not passed CNR

legislation since 2010 – leaving programs without significant improvements.



CNR is ripe with opportunity for Congress to improve programs and help end child hunger.

## Learn About Child Nutrition Programs Firsthand

There is no better way to learn about child hunger and see how child nutrition programs are working than to visit a child feeding program.

Feeding America food banks in your state partner with schools and nonprofits to feed children after school, on weekends, and during seasonal school breaks.

[Contact your food bank to arrange a visit and learn how programs could be strengthened to better meet your constituents' needs.](#)

## Allow Alternate Strategies to Help Feed Children When Schools Are Closed

■ **Provide a Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) grocery card to families with children eligible for free and reduced-price school meals during the summer months and when schools are closed to supplement their household food budgets:** Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), like previous Summer EBT pilots, provides families with funds on an EBT card to make up for meals missed at school due to disruptions. Evaluations of both programs prove they are effective at lowering food insecurity among children and lead to more nutritious meals. Making a program like those permanent will ensure children in need can access the healthy meals they need to thrive.

■ **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:** Site-based models for food delivery to kids aren't always accessible, especially since children are dispersed during the summer. Some children are at day camps and enrichment programs, but others are at home – making them harder to reach through a single, site-based delivery model. During the pandemic, Congress allowed non-school food providers to use alternate delivery models to serve kids in hard-to-reach areas – a change we should keep.

## Strengthen Access to School Meal Programs and WIC

■ **Strengthen access to and quality of school meals:** The National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs play an important role in reducing child hunger, improving nutrition and health, and supporting learning. Congress should improve and simplify access, moving more schools to offer free school meals to all students by expanding community eligibility and increasing opportunities to directly certify children for free meals. Congress must support schools as they improve the nutritional quality of meals by providing support, equipment, and training to meet guidelines set in past CNR legislation.

■ **Increase participation of eligible families in WIC:** WIC provides health and social service referrals as well as culturally appropriate, nutritious foods to young children who are low-income and pregnant and postpartum mothers. **Fewer than half of eligible children ages one to four participate in WIC.** Congress must ensure families' access to the benefits WIC provides by expanding eligibility, streamlining and extending certification, and supporting continued integration of technology to modernize service delivery.



### Have questions or need more information?

- Email the Feeding America Government Relations team at [policy@feedingamerica.org](mailto:policy@feedingamerica.org)
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