



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007

October 6, 2015

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
United State Senate
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
& Forestry
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Education and the Workforce
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
United State Senate
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
& Forestry
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Education and the Workforce
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, Chairman Kline, and Ranking Member Scott:

As Mayor of New York City, I am writing on behalf of our 1.1 million school-age children and over 100,000 infants and toddlers in child care to urge Congress to pass a strong Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act (CNR) this year. The CNR authorizes federal child nutrition programs, including school breakfast and lunch, summer meals, the child and adult care food program, and WIC. Local leaders around the country have come together through the United States Conference of Mayors to urge the federal government to pass a CNR that supports healthy meal opportunities for infants, children and teens. Today, I would like to share what this legislation means for New York City.

Approximately 1.4 million New York City residents, including 1 in 4 children, live in food insecure households, where they may be unable to afford to eat balanced meals, or are afraid that food will run out before they are able to buy more. Food insecurity disproportionately affects black and Hispanic families, and single-parent households. Growing up food insecure has devastating effects for children, including decreased performance in school, increased risk for certain health conditions, and increased hospitalizations of young children.

Child nutrition programs are some of our most important tools for ensuring that every New Yorker has the opportunity to live a long and healthy life. New York City relies on federal child nutrition funding to provide essential services and benefits to families to ensure that children have access to healthy meals at school, in child care, and over the summer. Continuing to serve students meals that contain fruits, vegetables, and are lower in sodium will help nurture healthy eating habits, which can carry into adulthood and help prevent diet-related health disparities.

The 2015 CNR provides Congress with an opportunity to protect, strengthen, and extend the benefits of child nutrition programs to allow local governments to serve all eligible children. Our school district, along with five of the other largest districts in the country, is leading an

Urban School Food Alliance to improve school food by shaping the market for high-quality, nutritious products and advocating for legislation that supports schools in providing healthy meals to children. Furthermore, an alliance of nonprofit advocates and community-based organizations, the New York City Alliance for Child Nutrition Reauthorization, has come together to support a strong CNR that would improve our ability to provide quality meals for children. We ask for your support for the following provisions in the legislation that invest in children and our local economy:

- Increase the USDA commodity dollar allocation so that school districts can buy quality domestic food products, especially those that come from local and regional producers, to significantly impact school food quality, bolster American agriculture, and improve child nutrition;
- Ensure that no child goes hungry over the summer by expanding opportunities for innovative, non-congregate food service models that allow us to reach more children in need, providing funding for an additional meal or snack, and supporting families who may face barriers to participation in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) with summer EBT benefits that have been shown to reduce food insecurity among children;
- Ease the administrative burden of operating school food programs by extending free meals to all children, regardless of family income;
- Preserve the updated nutrition standards for school meals, which include evidence-based, step-wise sodium reduction targets for upcoming school years. The current standards already are being met by 95% of school districts, with USDA offering continued support for the additional districts to achieve compliance. New York City has shown that nutrition standards for school meals result in better quality meals and healthier children, and that the market is able to adapt to meet school districts' demand for high quality, nutritious foods;
- Support the implementation of updated nutrition standards in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) by increasing reimbursement rates for meals and snacks;
- Provide full, continuous funding for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and extend eligibility to children up to six years of age to reach all nutritionally at-risk, eligible women and children with nutrition services and supplemental foods and to encourage and support breastfeeding, healthy eating, physical activity, and overweight prevention for children and their families; and
- Support regional farm economies and increase access to fresh, local food and nutrition education for children by bolstering the Farm to School program, and extending eligibility to early care providers.

Federal child nutrition programs are essential to the work we are doing to create a more just and equitable New York City. We have set ambitious goals to ensure that all New York City children are nurtured, protected, and thriving, but we cannot achieve them without the partnership of the federal government. We appreciate your action on this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Bill de Blasio
Mayor

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cc: New York City Congressional Delegation