



Statement on the Passage of “The Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access Act of 2016”

January 22, 2016

On behalf of the New York City Alliance for Child Nutrition Reauthorization (NYC4CNR), a diverse group of stakeholders working together to advocate for improvements to the 2016 CNR, we applaud Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow for brokering a bipartisan bill in the context of a challenging fiscal and political environment. We also thank Senator Kirsten Gillibrand for her efforts. We encourage Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Scott of the House Education and the Workforce Committee to pass a similarly bipartisan bill.

A strong CNR will strengthen local economies and communities by ensuring children are free from hunger, well-nourished, and ready to learn. Overall, we support the bill and recognize that many of the proposed legislation’s provisions will meet NYC4CNR’s vision for a strong CNR, including the following proposals:

1. Ensure that every child has year-round access to high quality food.

- The proposed bill will ensure that the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program maintains preferential treatment for schools able to provide fresh fruit and vegetable snacks to our most vulnerable children.
- The proposed bill would extend eligibility for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to children up to age six, closing the nutrition gap for children who do not enter kindergarten by their fifth birthday.
- The proposed bill will help to fill gaps in summer meal provision by expanding non-congregate food service opportunities, streamlining summer meal programs, and creating an option for summer WIC electronic benefit programs (EBT) for eligible families in some states.
- The proposed bill would maintain the Community Eligibility Provision and direct certification requirements to increase meal access, reduce error, and reduce administrative burden.

2. Maintain nutrition standards and support nutrition education.

- The proposed bill would not legislate nutrition standards, leaving the responsibility of setting standards to experts at the United States Department of Agriculture. We hope to see science-based nutrition standards maintained through proposed expedited rulemaking process.
- The proposed bill would mandate a study on the state of nutrition education in federal programs, laying the groundwork for improving programs that empower children to make healthy choices.

- The proposed bill would double funding for Farm to School, providing \$10 million to better meet the demand for grants that assist schools in purchasing local food, and providing nutrition education and establishing and maintaining school gardens.

3. Increase program resources and technical assistance.

- The proposed bill includes funds to support kitchen infrastructure and training and technical assistance for school food service providers

The Senate's proposed bill also contains some provisions of concern, specifically:

- The new verification process for school meals with increased requirements may cause more eligible low-income students to lose access to nutritious school meals. There is also a concern this new framework would increase workload for school professionals. We will want to monitor the effect of the increased verification requirements on participation rates to ensure the new process does not curtail progress.
- The new provisions for summer meals may not have a positive effect on New York City children. Summer electronic benefit programs for eligible families will use the WIC EBT system instead of the SNAP EBT system. This would limit access to families because of the lack of eligible retail stores that use the WIC system in New York City and nationally. New York City is not expected to have this technology until 2020. In addition, this option seems to be available only in areas where other summer meal options are not already established, except in rural areas, which may exclude New York City.

The last reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act legislated cuts to SNAP, which negatively impacted millions of Americans. No future legislation should include cuts to critical anti-hunger and nutrition programs. We look forward to continuing to advocate for New Yorkers, particularly the nearly one in four New York City children who live in food insecure households, throughout the reauthorization process.

Sincerely,

NYC4CNR

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