

August 25, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
S-221 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-222 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
S-230 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20512

CC: Senator Debbie Stabenow; Senator John Boozman; Congressman Bobby Scott, Congresswoman Virginia Foxx, Congressman David Scott; Congressman Glenn Thompson

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders Schumer, McConnell, and McCarthy:

The commitment Congress has shown to enhance and boost nutrition benefits over the last year is deeply appreciated and has already helped millions of individuals and children in the U.S. struggling with hunger. We applaud the House and Senate for taking critical steps toward advancing the FY2022 Budget Reconciliation. As Committees consider policy proposals that would be enacted in the Reconciliation bill, we urge that key nutrition and anti-poverty provisions included in the Administration's American Families Plan are prioritized.

Unfortunately, food insecurity continues to afflict families who are trying to get back on their feet after the devastating effects of the pandemic, particularly families of color who have been hardest hit. Congress has an incredible opportunity through the key provisions in the American Families Plan to mitigate hunger in the short-term and give families the resources they need to end generational poverty.

A recent analysis of U.S. Census Pulse Survey data collection found that 9 to 14 percent of households with children were unable to provide enough food for their children because they could not afford it. Typically, food-insecure households will reduce food intake for adults before scaling back food for children. However, since the beginning of the pandemic, higher rates of households are now restricting their child's diet because they cannot afford enough food. The survey also revealed that Black and Latino households were more than twice as likely to report not having enough to eat compared to white households.¹

The undersigned organizations urge Congress to pass the following key nutrition provisions as proposed in the Administration's American Families Plan to reduce the prevalence of food insecurity:

Permanently expand Summer EBT nationwide to address a long-standing and significant gap in child access to nutrition that exists when school is not in session. Many

¹ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of the United State Census Bureau's Week 33 Household Pulse Survey: June 23 – July 5. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-recessions-effects-on-food-housing-and>. Accessed July 23, 2021.

low-income families face barriers preventing them from participating in traditional congregate summer meal service sites. According to USDA's evaluation of the Summer EBT demonstration project, the additional cash benefit successfully decreased food insecurity and increased consumption of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains among children.² Summer EBT gives families flexibility and communities another tool to address childhood hunger in the summer.

Expand the Community Eligibility Provision to ensure more children have access to healthy school meals at no cost. Community eligibility is proven to increase participation in both school breakfast and lunch and reduce time spent on administrative tasks.³ The school meal application is a barrier to school meal participation among low-income families for a variety of reasons. Community eligibility eliminates the need for a paper application for determining school meal eligibility ensuring this is no longer a barrier for families. When all students are offered meals at no cost, more students will participate – reducing the stigma associated with receiving school meals.

Community eligibility strengthens the financial health of school meal programs because there is no longer a risk of students accruing unpaid school meal fees. Further, schools are not faced with the difficult task of denying children school meals because of unpaid school meal debt. Increasing the federal reimbursement and expanding eligibility for elementary schools as proposed by the American Families Plan also will make it easier for high-poverty schools to participate in this essential program.

Launch a healthy food incentive demonstration. Enhancing reimbursements for school meals served that exceed current school meal standards will ensure children have better access to nutrition at school— setting students up for long-term success in and outside of the classroom.

Allow individuals with felony-drug convictions to participate in SNAP. Ensuring access to nutrition is a key part of an individual's successful re-entry into communities after incarceration. Removing the participation ban is an important next step in tackling a rule that has disproportionately hurt Black, Indigenous and communities of color.

Permanently expand the Earned Income Tax Credit and extend the expanded provisions of the Child Tax Credit. Expanding tax credits will provide greatly needed relief for low-and-middle-income families to end the cycle of poverty. Better access to nutrition alone will not solve the root causes of poverty and hunger. The anti-poverty provisions included in the American Families Plan are a necessary piece of addressing the high rates of food insecurity in the United States.

In addition, we hope Congress will consider additional investments in nutrition programs not proposed in the American Families Plan, including funds to ensure local emergency hunger relief organizations can serve community members in need of food assistance and to strengthen

² United States Department of Agriculture, [Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children \(SEBTC\) Demonstration: Summary Report](#) (May 2016). Accessed July 23, 2021.

³ Logan, Christopher W., Patty Connor, Eleanor L. Harvill, Joseph Harknes, Hiren Nisar, Amy Checkoway, Laura R. Peck, Azim Shivji, Edwin Bein, Marjorie Levin, and Ayesha Enver. Community Eligibility Provision Evaluation. Project Officer: John R. Endahl. Prepared by Abt Associates for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, February 2014.

the nutrition programs that continue to feed millions of kids and families as we recover from the pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic we have witnessed how millions of families have been left behind, today we are at a critical moment where the U.S. can choose to support a more equitable recovery or one that continues to exacerbate the disparities and continues to leave behind the underserved communities that have experienced significant hardship. We thank Congress for its continued commitment to addressing hunger and poverty and are excited to see provisions from the American Families Plan move across the finish line.

For more information or any questions regarding this letter, please contact Eric Mitchell, Executive Director, Alliance to End Hunger at emitchell@alliancetoendhunger.org or 202-688-1123.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

A Place at the Table
Alliance to End Hunger
Bread For the World
DoorDash
Feeding America
ICNA Council for Social Justice (ICNA CSJ)
Islamic Relief USA
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
National WIC Association
Penny Appeal USA
Poetry X Hunger
RESULTS
Save the Children
Save the Children Action Network (SCAN)
Share Our Strength
Society of St. Andrew
Souper Bowl of Caring

State-Based Organizations

Alabama Childhood Food Solutions Inc
AR Hunger Relief Alliance
Beyond Hunger (IL)
Children's Hunger Alliance (OH)
Des Moines Area Religious Council
Indy Hunger Network
Interreligious Food Consortium (IFC)
Syracuse NY
Iowa Hunger Coalition
Ottawa Food (MI)
Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast
Tennessee
Smith County Food Security Council (TX)
WHEAT (World Hunger Ecumenical Az
Task Force Inc)