

## **Policy Priorities for the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health**

This September, the White House will hold a Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health where a national strategy to end hunger by 2030 will be released.

Share Our Strength and its No Kid Hungry campaign has identified five timely, actionable policy changes that can immediately begin to improve nutrition access for families, so every child can have a healthy start in life.

As our nation continues to recover from the health crisis caused by the pandemic and battles ongoing economic challenges, we need policies designed to ensure all children have the opportunity to be safe and nourished, and live up to their full potential.

We know when children have access to consistent daily nutrition, their overall academic, health and economic outcomes improve.

We urge the White House to consider the following policy recommendations and encourage you to submit them alongside us through the [White House's online portal](#).

### **Modernize the Summer Meals Program**

The federal summer meals program helps to feed kids at risk of hunger during the summer months, even when schools are closed. But the way the program was designed means it does not fully meet the needs of families and children today, especially those living in rural and hard-to-reach communities. During the pandemic, the program reached many more children through increased program flexibility. We urge lawmakers to utilize these hard-earned lessons and:

- Authorize a permanent option for “non-congregate” sites to ensure more children have access to summer meals.
- Lower the area eligibility threshold to give communities more flexibility to select site locations that are accessible to the children who most need meals.
- Reduce red tape and excessive bureaucracy by streamlining the administrative requirements for summer and afterschool meals programs, making it easier for schools and community organizations to serve needed meals year-round.

### **Support Nationwide Summer EBT**

The Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) program provides families with children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals with a grocery benefit during the summer months. This program started as a demonstration project in a handful of states and a version of it was implemented during the pandemic. We urge lawmakers to:

- Implement a permanent, nationwide Summer EBT program to reduce food insecurity and improve nutrition.

## Strengthen SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a monthly benefit that helps parents and caregivers buy groceries. SNAP is one of the safest, most efficient ways to make sure kids get the food they need.

The current program, however, isn't reaching all the kids and families who qualify. To close this gap and improve the program's effectiveness, we urge lawmakers to:

- Enhance SNAP eligibility.
- Increase benefits to ensure they more accurately reflect the cost of a nutritious diet.
- Expand the availability of online ordering and delivery using SNAP benefits.
- Invest in program modernization and support program innovation.
- Make permanent the program improvements adopted during the pandemic.

## Expand No-Cost School Meals

School meals play an essential role in providing school-age children with more of the nutrition they need. Programs like the Community Eligibility Provision, or CEP, allows schools in high-poverty areas to reach more students with the nutrition they need. Instead of collecting paper applications from each student, eligible schools can offer meals at no cost to all students. This streamlines meal service for schools and removes the stigma from students being singled out as poor. To reduce the administrative burdens of the program, increase its efficiency and eliminate stigma, we urge lawmakers to:

- Extend the benefits of no-cost school meals to additional students by
  - Increasing the eligibility for free meals and eliminating the reduced-price meal category.
  - Expanding CEP to streamline operations for schools and families.
- Allow for nationwide, permanent direct certification using Medicaid data.
- Improve data systems and technology.

## Improve WIC

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) supports the health of low-income women, infants and children up to age 5 who are at risk of hunger. It provides nutritious food, nutrition education, breastfeeding support and referrals to health care and social services for millions of families. However, WIC participation rates face a sharp decline due to many barriers, including challenging shopping experiences during the pandemic.

To modernize the program and increase WIC participation, we urge lawmakers to:

- Remove barriers to accessing and utilizing WIC.
- Expand access to online shopping and delivery.
- Increase the flexibility of WIC appointments with remote visits.
- Extend program certification periods.