

October 29, 2010

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor
2181 Rayburn Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

As organizations working to reduce hunger and improve nutrition among children, we appreciate your efforts to reauthorize child nutrition programs this year. It is imperative that the reauthorization be completed this Congress. We strongly urge you to pursue a new way forward that:

- Allows the House to pass the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (S. 3307) immediately when Congress returns in November;
- Ensures that SNAP is vigorously safeguarded from further cuts; and,
- Addresses the SNAP cut and gaps in access to child nutrition programs through other timely vehicles.

We conclude that the best Congress can do for children and families is to secure now the important improvements made in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, while addressing concerns about SNAP and access through other timely legislative or administrative vehicles.

We are troubled that the bill is paid for with a reduction in SNAP ARRA benefits and that it does not fully address the access improvements needed to connect children with the programs. We remain particularly concerned about the impact this will have on low-income children and families.

Yet we also recognize that with one in four children at risk of hunger and one in three overweight or obese, our children cannot afford to wait for the improvements to child nutrition that are made in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. In urging a compromise that addresses our concerns through separate vehicles, we seek to move beyond the impasse holding up passage of the bill and the improved nutrition our children need.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act offers a real chance to improve nutrition for all children. By improving opportunities for healthy meals in and out of school, the bill would take an important step forward in addressing both child hunger and obesity:

- The bill would help reduce hunger and increase children's access to healthy meals by expanding the after-school supper program nationwide, better connecting eligible children with free school meals, and extending the WIC certification period for children

to one year. The bill would test innovative strategies for ending child hunger and support research into the causes and consequences of childhood hunger. The bill would also authorize grants to retain summer food program sponsors, improve and expand breakfast programs, and encourage states to develop comprehensive strategies to end child hunger.

- The bill would make progress against childhood obesity and improve the nutritional quality of meals by strengthening nutrition standards for all foods sold in schools, providing schools with increased resources and training to improve meal quality, and supporting farm-to-school programs and school gardens. The bill would improve opportunities for WIC mothers to fully breastfeed their infants. The bill would also establish nutrition requirements and provide technical assistance to help child care providers improve the health of young children.

Even with the important progress made by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, more must be done to reach the goals of ending child hunger by 2015 and solving childhood obesity in a generation. We appreciate the new commitment that Agriculture Secretary Vilsack made to use his administrative authority to further improve access to the school lunch and breakfast programs. As we keep working toward these goals, Congress and the Administration must continue to improve access to child nutrition programs – such as addressing gaps during weekends, summers, and breakfast – and strengthen and safeguard the SNAP program.

Thank you for your leadership throughout this process. We look forward to working with you in our shared commitment to ending hunger and improving nutrition for all children.

Sincerely,

Alliance to End Hunger
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Feeding America
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
National WIC Association
NETWORK, A Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Voices for America's Children