



FIRST FOCUS

CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN

May 28, 2014

The Honorable Harold Rogers, Chair Committee
on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
H-307 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita. M. Lowey, Ranking
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chair
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA, & Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
2362 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Farr, Ranking
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA, & Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Aderholt, and Ranking Member Farr:

I am writing on behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children (FFCC), a national bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, regarding the upcoming Fiscal Year 2015 appropriations full committee mark up.

Federal child nutrition programs help alleviate hunger and improve child obesity rates, as both can be a consequence of inadequate diets and poor nutrition. Nearly one in five children in our country live in a family that struggles to put food on the table. Federal nutrition programs are effective investments that protect against hunger, improve nutrition, and promote health. Programs are specifically targeted to children and other vulnerable populations.

Although we appreciate the efforts to fully fund child nutrition programs in the committee's draft bill, including the \$25 million for school meal equipment grants which will help schools upgrade their kitchen equipment and serve healthier meals to children, we strongly oppose the Fiscal Year 2015 Agriculture Appropriations bill in its current form.

FFCC strongly opposes efforts to use the appropriations process to change or weaken federal child nutrition programs. This includes efforts that take away the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) authority to decide what fruits and vegetables are in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food package. Since this is a supplemental program it is important that USDA rely on current science to decide what is lacking in this population's diet and only include those items.

USDA is currently in the process of reviewing the WIC food package and we support this being completed before changes are made. The current WIC policy on white potatoes reflects the

recommendations of the Institute of Medicine, in keeping with WIC's long-standing commitment to science-based nutrition policy and should only be changed once the review is completed.

FFCC also opposes efforts to alter or delay implementation of meal standards in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program, or to weaken or delay rules that limit sugary beverages and unhealthy snack foods in our nation's schools. If schools face budget constraints, Congress should ensure that schools have the resources necessary to meet nutrition standards, not to lower the standards that protect children. With 90% of schools meeting the new standards and the United State Department of Agriculture continuing to provide extensive technical assistance to schools, now is not the time to roll back the improvements to schools meals.

FFCC also opposes language that restricts summer food service pilots to only rural communities. Although hunger in rural communities should be studied and demonstration projects should test various approaches to feeding hungry children in these communities, urban and suburban communities also have challenges in making sure that children get access to food in the summer months. Hunger is not regulated to a particular area of the country and children all across the country face food insecurity in the summer months. Our country should do its best to test the best approaches to serving kids food in the summer months no matter where a hungry child lives.

Lastly, report language that would restrict USDA from developing special dietary guidance for children under 24 months is terribly misguided. It is important to look into the dietary needs of this special population since it is such an important time in a child's life. As children develop, it is important to have science-based information on what nutrition is needed for a young child so that all children have a healthy start in life and a strong foundation for their future.

FFCC urges members of the United States House Appropriations Committee to support amendments that would remove the above harmful provisions from the draft bill. Without these changes FFCC does not support the legislation moving forward. Child nutrition programs are vital tools in protecting against hunger and providing balanced diets for our nation's children and should be strengthened and built upon, rather than weakened.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Lesley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bruce Lesley

President

First Focus Campaign for Children