

July 29, 2020

The Honorable Bobby Scott
U.S. House of Representatives
1201 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim McGovern
U.S. House of Representatives
408 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Marcia Fudge
U.S. House of Representatives
2344 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ilhan Omar
U.S. House of Representatives
1517 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici
U.S. House of Representatives
2231 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Scott, Fudge, Bonamici, McGovern, and Omar:

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions, we are writing to express our thanks and support for The Pandemic Child Hunger Prevention Act (H.R. 7887).

The pandemic has underscored the importance of free and reduced price school meals. Childhood hunger has long been a problem in this country, with nearly 11.2 million children living in a food insecure household in 2018.¹ The dual economic and public health crises caused by the pandemic have only exacerbated the problem, leaving nearly 14 million children without enough to eat as of July 9th.² School meals have been especially helpful in feeding children during this difficult time. In April alone, school nutrition programs served nearly 134 million meals.³

Unfortunately, school nutrition programs are struggling financially. School closures resulting from the pandemic have led to decreased revenue and increased costs, such as grab and go carts, packaging supplies, meal transportation costs and personal protective equipment that ensures employees, students, and their families are safe.⁴ Help is needed to ensure schools are able to continue providing meals to students in need.

Poor nutrition directly influences health and well-being throughout a child's life. Food insecurity is specifically associated with poorer physical and mental health, lower school performance and diminished psycho-social

¹ https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Brief_Impact%20of%20Covid%20on%20Child%20Food%20Insecurity%204.22.20.pdf

² <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/07/09/about-14-million-children-in-the-us-are-not-getting-enough-to-eat/>
³ <https://schoolnutrition.org/news-publications/press-releases/2020/sna-survey-reveals-covid-19-school-meal-trends-financial-impacts/>

⁴ Ibid.

functioning.⁵ School nutrition programs are essential in providing millions of children with proper nutrition, and they need assistance during this difficult time to continue providing meals.

We applaud you for your leadership to ensure every student is eligible for free school meals, off-site meals, and afterschool meals and snacks during the upcoming school year. This will cut back on administrative costs for school nutrition programs, while also ensuring every student can be fed.

During this already difficult time, we should be making it easier – not harder – for struggling school nutrition programs to provide free meals to every student. We thank you for your leadership on behalf of children and families, and we look forward to working with you to help advance this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Lesley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a blue underline beneath the name.

Bruce Lesley
President

⁵ <https://www.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/child-economy-study.pdf>