



FIRST FOCUS

CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN

May 19, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Chair Committee
on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
S-128 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby, Ranking
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
S-146A Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Pryor, Chair Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, & Related
Agencies
U.S. Senate
129 Senate Dirksen Office Building Washington, DC
20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Ranking
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
FDA, & Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
190 Senate Dirksen Office Building Washington, DC
20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Ranking Member Shelby, Chairman Pryor, and Ranking Member Blunt:

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.

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

FFCC strongly opposes efforts to use the appropriations process to change or weaken federal child nutrition programs. This includes efforts to require the inclusion of white potatoes in the WIC Program. The current WIC policy on potatoes reflects the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine, in keeping with WIC's long-standing commitment to science-based nutrition policy.

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 nearly 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 role back the improvements to schools meals.

FFCC urges Congress to fully fund the following child nutrition programs in Fiscal Year 2015 appropriations:

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP helps to put food on the table for nearly 22 million children each month, and it closely follows changes in unemployment and underemployment. 82% of all benefits go to households with a child, senior, or disabled person.

We also ask that Congress fully fund the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program (SNAP-Ed) at \$407 million, as mandated in the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008. SNAP-Ed provides nutrition education that helps low-income children and adults develop knowledge and skills to find, buy, and prepare healthy foods on limited budgets.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

WIC serves low-income women and young children to age five, providing them with a nutritious monthly food package, nutrition education, healthcare and social service referrals to ensure that this at-risk population receives the quality nutrition and healthcare essential for healthy growth and development.

FFCC urges Congress to fund WIC at \$6.823 billion and up to \$6.864 billion (when including the inflation-adjusted authorized set asides). Set asides include funding for breastfeeding peer counselors, breastfeeding support services, MIS/EBT funding, and infrastructure funding. As well as we ask that Congress replenish the WIC Contingency Fund for any unforeseen food cost or participation increases.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

TEFAP ensures a steady stream of nutritious USDA commodities for distribution through our nation's charitable food systems. Helping food banks deliver nutritious food through pantries, shelters, and kitchens and provide support for storage and distribution. For families that make too much money to qualify for federal nutrition programs, charitable nutrition operations can be a lifeline in the case of job loss or reduced hours for parents. Congress should provide the authorized funding level of \$100 million for TEFAP storage and distribution funds, as well as fund TEFAP commodities at \$324 million, as provided by the 2014 farm bill.

Additional Important Child Nutrition Programs

Vital child nutrition programs operate in schools, daycare centers, after school programs, and summer settings, to provide nutritious meals and snacks that help children learn and grow up to be healthy adults.

We ask that Congress fully support the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program in order to provide children with nutritious meals and snacks. In addition Congress should provide \$35 million for school meal equipment grants to help schools upgrade their kitchen equipment to help schools serve healthier meals and provide food assistance for children.

Child nutrition programs are vital tools in protecting against hunger and providing balanced diets for our nation's children. We thank you for all that you do on behalf of children and families and we urge you to fully support the funding and structure of the above programs.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley
President

First Focus Campaign for Children