

Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, and Forestry  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-2204

Ranking Member John Boozman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, and Forestry  
141 Hart Senate Office Building Washington,  
DC 20510

November 18, 2022

**National PTA Urges the Inclusion of Federal Child Nutrition Provisions in End-of-Year  
Omnibus FY23 Appropriations Package**

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow & Ranking Member Boozman,

On behalf of National PTA and our millions of members nationwide, we urge you to invest in our children and families by ensuring that child nutrition is included within the year-end omnibus appropriations package for Fiscal Year 2023.

Child nutrition programs serve millions of children across every state, every day, but were last reauthorized by Congress over ten years ago through the bipartisan Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. These programs served to keep hunger at bay amid the COVID-19 crisis and families knew they could rely on their schools and community organizations to help them make ends meet. School meal debt, which disappeared during the pandemic, has returned with a vengeance. In some places, food that has been served is being taken away from students who don't have enough money in their accounts and the shame and stigma felt by students who cannot afford a school lunch will only exacerbate the mental health challenges faced by so many right now. With increased rates of food insecurity and obesity experienced by children and families, persistent workforce shortages, and supply chain issues facing our nation's school nutrition departments, Congress must act now to ensure our families have increased access to these vital programs.

As our nation recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic and in the face of rising costs of groceries and fresh food, families simply cannot wait any longer for Congress to reauthorize these programs. We know that healthy children learn better and are more productive—both in and out of the classroom – and we call upon you as our national leaders to champion any measures that would support academic recovery for our children after nearly three years of disruption to their childhood. The academic recovery needs of our nation's students is too great right now for families and educators alike to worry if they are even ready to learn.

We urge you to make family-focused improvements to our federal child nutrition programs through the end-of-year FY23 omnibus appropriations package, consistent with the Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act (H.R. 8450), including:

- **Establishing permanent, nationwide Medicaid direct certification**, streamlining the process by allowing a family to qualify for free school meals if they already participate in Medicaid;
- **Expanding eligibility of the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program** to cover children up to age 6;
- **Establishing a permanent Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) program** that would offer \$75 per month per child to help cover the cost of food over the summer months when children lose access to free or reduced-price school meals;
- **Providing all states with the option to opt into statewide community eligibility**, lowering the eligibility threshold from 40% identified students to 25% identified students, and raising the multiplier for federal reimbursement from 1.6 to 2.5.

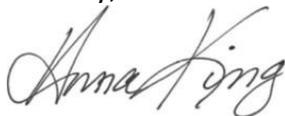
A permanent, nationwide Medicaid direct certification system would more accurately capture poverty levels in communities, allowing high-need schools to potentially reach the threshold to qualify for community eligibility, further streamlining administrative processes and ensuring all children living in poverty have access to nutritious meals throughout the school day.

In addition, our association supports any efforts that will help end child hunger, support our nation's families, and improve the mental and physical health of our nation's youth, including an additional meal or snack in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), encouraging nutrition and mental health to be included in local school wellness policies, and increasing the reach of farm-to-school programs that bring fresh foods into our schools.

National PTA and PTA members nationwide have long advocated to ensure all children have access to critical nutritious food options. We know that healthy children learn better and are more productive—both in and out of the classroom—and providing all of our nation's youth with healthy food options and nutrition education is key to their long-term health, well-being and success. We strongly urge you to include these child nutrition provisions within the upcoming FY23 omnibus appropriations package and not miss this opportunity to invest in our nation's future and families.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Kate Clabaugh, National PTA Director of Government Affairs, at [kclabaugh@pta.org](mailto:kclabaugh@pta.org).

Sincerely,



Anna King  
President  
National PTA



Nathan R. Monell, CAE  
Executive Director  
National PTA