

## 2022 PTA CAPITOL HILL DAY ASK: CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION

*Because all children deserve quality, nutritious school meals!*

### **Congress must pass a Child Nutrition Reauthorization package this year that:**

- Ensures school meals are healthy and nutritious for growing children and teens, consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans
- Enables schools to successfully transition after the pandemic back to following the evidenced-based meal patterns through higher reimbursement rates, administrative flexibilities and technical assistance around production, procurement and preparation
- Encourages schools to adopt student wellness policies with the input of families and provide adequate time for kids to eat and play

### **Issue Overview**

Federal child nutrition programs were last reauthorized over a decade ago through the bipartisan Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. We now urge Congress to strengthen and improve access to quality, nutritious school meals for all children with another historical reauthorization of these programs.

- Today, most schools in the U.S. (91%) participate in at least one of the federal child nutrition programs.
- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, each school day, almost 30 million children participated in the National School Lunch Program and almost 15 million participated in the School Breakfast Program.
- For many of these children, breakfast and lunch provided at school may be their only source of nutrition for the day.
- On average, a child will consume about one-third to one-half of their daily calories during the school day.
- For children living in poverty, the risk of obesity declined substantially each year after implementation of the 2010 reauthorization, such that obesity prevalence would have been 47% higher in 2018 if the nutrition standards had not been updated.

### **PTA's Recommendations**

With increased rates of food insecurity and obesity experienced by children and families due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, persistent workforce shortages, and supply chain issues facing our nation's school nutrition departments, Congress must act now to ensure the administrative flexibilities that have been available since the onset of the crisis continue.

# HILL DAY EXPERIENCE

## at the 125th Anniversary Convention

PTA urges members of Congress to co-sponsor the following bills:

- Universal School Meals Program Act (S.1530, H.R.3115)
- School Food Modernization Act (S. 876, H.R.4379)
- Scratch Cooked Meals for Students Act (H.R. 6608)
- Improving Mental Health and Wellness in Schools Act (S.2930, H.R. 5526)
- Healthy Meal Time Act (H.R.6526)

**Universal School Meals Program Act (S.1530, H.R. 3115)** would expand access to free meals in school such that any and all students at a school participating in federal meal programs would qualify for free meals (rather than only students from households at a certain income level).

**School Food Modernization Act (S. 876, H.R.4379)** would establish a USDA grant program to support infrastructure improvements to school lunch facilities and to train school food service personnel to serve healthier meals and improve food safety.

**Scratch Cooked Meals for Students Act (H.R. 6608)** would award competitive grants of no more than \$200,000 to school food authorities and LEAs to create the Scratch Cooking Pilot Program, providing school meals cooked from scratch using whole, fresh and/or minimally processed ingredients. ***Ask of Senators: Champion and introduce a companion bill in the Senate.***

**Improving Mental Health and Wellness in Schools Act (S.2930, H.R. 5526)** would encourage nutrition and mental health to be included in local school wellness policies.

**Healthy Meal Time Act (H.R. 6526)** would direct the Department of Agriculture, in coordination with the Department of Education, to provide schools with best practices for scheduling lunch and recess and commission a study of current practices in schools. This would help ensure that students have adequate time to eat and reduce food waste. ***Ask of Senators: Champion and introduce a companion bill in the Senate.***

*Questions? Email National PTA Director of Government Affairs Kate Clabaugh ([kclabaugh@PTA.org](mailto:kclabaugh@PTA.org)).*