**Child Nutrition 2016**

There are 2 bills in congress that can affect Child Nutrition

The House Education and Workforce Committee released its reauthorization bill in April 2016, titled the “– [Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016](http://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/improving_child_nutrition_and_education_act_of_2016.pdf)” (H.R. 5003)

**What is proposed?**

**Weaken Community eligibility Provision (CEP)**: In high poverty towns/cities the current process is to have the city apply for community eligibility which allows the schools to provide breakfast and lunch free. The bill would cut down on eligibility.

**What would this do?** Each household would need to do a meal application and each would need to be verified. This, of course, increases administrative paperwork. Vulnerable families such as homeless, migrant, immigrant or those with limited English would fall through the cracks and lose access to school meals.

**How would this effect CT residents**? 193 CT schools serving 95,000 students would lose community eligibility under house bill 5003

**Other provisions of the bill that interfere with Child Nutrition:**

* There is no provision to provide an additional snack for children in care for long hours (8 hours or longer)
* Does not allow any agency who is not a school to operate summer food programs. Fewer sites>less food available to children. Would no longer allow a benefit card for food in the summer that off sets grocery costs when children are not in school
* Does not expand Women, Infant, Childrens Program (WIC).
* Limits USDA’s autonomy in establishing regulations and requirements for school lunch
* Weakens nutrition standards for meals by delaying implementation of sodium standards and limits whole grain requirements. Requires USDA to revise school meal rules every 3 years.
* Weakens rules around snacks and beverages by exempting food sold as a fundraiser; allows a la carte purchases which decreases nutritional standards

**Our Ask: Oppose this bill**

The Senate Agriculture Committee released its reauthorization bill in January 2016, titled “[The Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access Act of 2016](http://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/WEI16005.pdf)” (pdf).

**Summary of Provisions**

**Child and Adult Care Food Program**

• Allows the option of an additional snack for children in care for nine or more hours a day.

• Simplifies eligibility for proprietary (for-profit) child care centers by extending the length of certification periods.

• Reduces administratively burdensome paperwork for parents, providers and sponsors.

• Requires USDA to encourage CACFP institutions to engage with state agencies, school districts and schools to access donated commodity foods.

• Allows Residential Child Care Institutions to choose to participate in CACFP in addition to the National School Lunch Program.

• Expands eligibility for CACFP to schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

• Provides for nutrition education for parents and participants emphasizing the relationship between nutrition, physical activity, and health.

• Mandates USDA review of the CACFP “serious deficiency” process to assure a clear, fair and impartial system.

**Summer Meals**

• Allows Summer Food sponsors that are not schools to provide meals and snacks to children after school during the school year through the Summer Food Service Program. This will allow sponsors to operate one program rather than two, and significantly reduce duplicative paperwork and confusing administrative rules. The option is phased in over time beginning with seven states in 2017, growing to 10 in 2018, to 12 in 2019, and adding a state each subsequent year.

• Provides low-income families, in states that have implemented WIC EBT and choose to provide the benefit, with an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card with funds to purchase certain foods at retail stores.  FRAC and other advocates will work with Congress to make sure that households who have access to Summer EBT are able to utilize their benefits broadly at retail outlets in their community. It also sets a cap on the number of children that can be served nationwide, beginning with 235,000 children in 2018, 260,000 in 2019 and 285,000 by 2020.

• Creates the opportunity for a six state pilot program that would allow summer food sponsors to provide a third meal. Funding for the pilot would need to be appropriated.

• Waives the congregate program requirement when operating summer meals in select rural, high poverty areas, and when existing sites face severe weather or safety concerns.

• Reauthorizes the Community Child Nutrition Snack Pilot (CCNSP), which allows sponsors in California to serve snacks during the school year and meals during the summer months or during year-round schools’ extended breaks without needing to complete additional paperwork.

• Increases the funding available to conduct health and safety inspections.

• Authorizes research projects to identify barriers and test new methods regarding program participation. Funding for the projects would need to be appropriated.

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

• Provides state the option to increase the age of eligibility for children to receive benefits from the program–eligibility will end at age six rather than at the fifth birthday, with the exception of children participating in full day kindergarten.

• Provides states the option to certify infants for two year eligibility periods.

• Authorizes $25 million annually in WIC MIS and EBT system development.

• Emphasizes the importance of implementing EBT by the 2020 deadline.

• Strengthens WIC vendor rules to assure access for WIC participants.

• Reauthorizes the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

**National School Lunch Program**

**School Nutrition Standards**

• Protects the new school meal nutrition standards that are improving children’s health and the school nutrition environment.  Directs USDA to revise whole grain and sodium standards with the expectation that USDA will require 80 percent of grains served to be whole grain rich and that the implementation of the next sodium target will be delayed by two years. This provision continues to move sodium reduction forward, as supported by the science, and keeps the majority of the whole grains standard intact.

• Establishes an advisory panel on competitive foods.

• Establishes an interagency workgroup on maximizing the value of the increased fruits and vegetables in school meals.

**Operations**

• Provides $30 million per year for school equipment grants and establishes a loan program.

• Provides $10 million per year (up from $5 million per year) in Farm to School grants and allows institutions operating the Summer Food Service Program and CACFP to apply for the funding in addition to schools.

• Replaces the requirement that schools increase their school lunch fees gradually each year if the fee is below the free lunch reimbursement rate with a requirement that districts provide non-Federal revenue, which can include school lunch fees and other sources of funds, to cover that difference.

• Funds USDA’s Team Nutrition program to provide training and technical assistance to school food and other child nutrition program operators.

• Authorizes the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program with added exemptions.

• Updates the National School Lunch Program training requirements to emphasize best practices, communication, and collaboration.

**Process for Verifying School Meal Applications**

• Under the proposed language, the process by which information in families’ school meal applications is verified is completely redesigned. In an effort to strengthen program integrity, the percentage of school meal applications required to be verified is shifted to a sliding scale starting at a floor of three percent and extending to a ceiling of 10 percent of applications. By meeting certain state and district level criteria, school districts may be able to reduce the verification percentage requirement to the minimum level of three percent. The pool from which verified applications are drawn is now broadened to include directly certified and categorically eligible students such as homeless, runaway, migrant or foster children or those enrolled in Head Start. Schools implementing the Community Eligibility Provision will not be subject to verification requirements.

• FRAC is concerned that increasing verification requirements will inevitably cause some eligible students to lose access to free or reduced price school meals. One of the primary ways that students currently lose school meal benefits is failure to respond to follow-up requests for additional income information. Oftentimes, families do not respond because the request fails to reach their current address or communications are not conducted in the primary language of the household. Under the proposed framework, the number of applications to be verified may increase significantly for some school districts. With such steep increases in verification, a disproportionate amount of vulnerable families such as those who are homeless, migrant, immigrant and have limited English proficiency may lose access to school meals for which they are eligible.

**Investments Needed**

The broad congressional support for the reauthorization of the child nutrition programs is a testament to the long-standing tradition of bipartisanship that has surrounded these programs for decades. As the authorization bill proceeds through the Senate and the Congress, we call on leaders of both parties to seek every opportunity to explore alternatives to provide critically-needed, **new resources** to strengthen and improve these vital nutrition programs for our children.

**Our ask: Strengthen this bill.**