

FRAC PRIORITIES FOR CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION 2004

- **Make the “Lugar” summer food pilot apply nationwide, and to all sponsors.** This pilot, by simplifying cost accounting requirements for public sponsors in 13 states and Puerto Rico, has led to higher program participation in the critically important summer food program, while participation in other states has eroded. We need to make the pilot permanent, national and applicable to all sponsors – public and non-profit. That could decrease hunger and improve nutrition among many more low-income children during the summer months when school lunches and breakfasts are not available. *(S.1021: Summer Food Service Program Improvement Act; & H.R.3416: Healthy Children through Better Nutrition Act)*
- **Improve the area eligibility test so that more communities can provide nutritious meals and snacks to children in summer and afterschool programs and in family child care homes.** Community-based program eligibility typically depends on the extent of participation in the free and reduced price school lunch program in a community: if more than 50 percent of the children are eligible for free and reduced-price meals, then community-based programs can offer federal nutrition benefits to children after school and in the summer, and in family child care. The 50 percent test is too high, especially for rural areas. It used to be 33 percent for summer food. Last year Congress made 40 percent the test in Title I education programs, and, in effect, for afterschool programs. It makes sense to do the same for the child nutrition programs. *(S.1021; S.1022: Child and Adult Care Food Program Improvement Act of 2003; & H.R.3416)*
- **Make school breakfasts available to more children.** Research has shown the great benefits of school breakfast to children’s school achievement, behavior and attendance. Making breakfast available to all children, regardless of income, in a targeted set of schools – those with high percentages of low-income children, especially at the high school level where breakfast consumption is held down by students’ reluctance to be seen as participating in a “poverty program” – and providing funds for breakfast expansion and start-up efforts could help to increase participation and bring more children the educational and health benefits of eating breakfast. *(S.1020: School Breakfast Improvement Act; & H.R.3416)*
- **Make suppers available in afterschool programs in low-income areas.** Many afterschool programs are now offered into the early evening because of longer hours of work and nontraditional hours faced by growing numbers of low-income parents. Currently, non-profits in seven states can offer nutritious suppers in afterschool programs in low-income areas (DE, IL, MI, MO, NY, OR, and PA). This pilot has been very successful, and should be extended to all states, and to schools (through the National School Lunch Program) as well as the non-profits. *(S.1022; & H.R.3416)*
- **Increase access to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for preschoolers.** CACFP is a key support for quality affordable care and good nutrition for preschoolers. Quality could be improved, paperwork reduced and outdated rules modernized through these modest steps: providing additional resources to sponsors of family child care homes so that they can focus on nutrition education and effective outreach; allowing families which are participating in Medicaid or SCHIP to be automatically eligible to participate in CACFP; and making permanent the current rule which allows for-profit child care centers to participate in CACFP if 25 percent or more of the children they serve are low-income. *(S.1022; & H.R.3416)*
- **Make no changes to the certification process for free and reduced price meals that would cause eligible low-income children to be dropped from the child nutrition programs.** Some have proposed increasing the number of children whose school lunch applications are subject to verification. (Currently the general rule is that three percent of applications are verified.) Based on research from USDA and others, we know that increased verification will mean that thousands of eligible children will be dropped from participation in the child nutrition programs – as many as three eligible children lost for every ineligible child weeded out. Until we understand better the nature and extent of any certification errors in these programs, and the potential consequences of proposed changes, we should not apply an untested policy that could negatively affect tens of thousands of low-income children. *(H.R.3416)*