

Ensuring Nutrition for America's Students Act Summary

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, most schools in almost all states had seen most in person classes canceled for the remainder of the school year, with in person fall classes still being up in the air. This has left the almost 30 million children who receive free or reduced priced lunch at school, wondering how they will receive these meals. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 provided the Secretary of Agriculture authority to approve state agency Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program plans for temporary emergency standards of eligibility and levels of benefits under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008. Children who would receive free or reduced price meals under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act if not for the school closure are eligible under this provision.

The Pandemic EBT Program provides nutritional resources to families who have lost access to free or reduced-price school meals due to school closures caused by the pandemic. Families receive benefits on a new or existing EBT card to help to use to purchase food. The average benefit is \$5.70/day per student, retroactive to when school initially closed. Now that nearly all states have been approved to operate P-EBT, it is time to build on the success of P-EBT.

Bill Summary

The House passed HEROES Act would extend the current Pandemic EBT program to provide benefits through the summer and through fiscal year 2021. It also would allow states to provide benefits to young children who would have received free meals at child care. The *Ensuring Nutrition for America's Students Act* would make all of the P-EBT improvements that were included in the HEROES Act, but it also includes:

- **Making P-EBT more responsive to the variety of ways that schools may operate in the upcoming school year due to the pandemic.** As schools look ahead to the fall, many are considering a reduction in the number of days or hours that students will be physically at school. This is expected to impact the number of school breakfasts and lunches that students will be able to receive. The Act would allow States to provide P-EBT benefits to replace those missed meals in addition to the current approach which provides benefits if schools close for 5 consecutive days or more in response to COVID-19.
- **Extending P-EBT through calendar year 2021.** Due to the uncertainty around the reopening of schools around the country, this would allow States to provide P-EBT benefits for a longer period, if needed.
- **Allowing States to automatically provide P-EBT benefits to school children whose households participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), TANF, and Medicaid (if the household income is 185 percent or below poverty).** This would ensure that no low-income children are missed by the program due to administrative barriers and would ease administrative requirements for States.
- **Extending P-EBT to low-income families who rely on meals provided through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).** Currently, P-EBT is limited to families whose children depended on school meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), but it does not respond to the need created when child care centers close and no longer provide meals through CACFP.

Endorsements

1,000 Days

AASA, The School Superintendents Association

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Alliance for Immigrant Survivors

Alliance to End Hunger

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Federation of Teachers

American Heart Association

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum

Balanced

Bread for the World

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research

Center For Science in the Public Interest

Child Care Aware® of America

Child Welfare League of America

Children's Defense Fund

Coalition on Human Needs

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S Provinces

Congressional Hunger Center

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)

Environmental Working Group

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Farm to School Network

First Focus Campaign for Children

Food Bank for New York City

Food Bank of Central New York

Food Bank of the Southern Tier

Food Policy Action

Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)

FoodCorps

Foodlink

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Healthy Food America

Healthy Schools Campaign

Hunger Free America

Hunger Solutions NY

Islamic Relief USA

Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future

Justice for Migrant Women

Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Teachers College, Columbia University

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

Migrant Legal Action Program

MomsRising

NAACP

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Association of Social Workers

National Coalition for the Homeless

National Community Action Partnership

National Diaper Bank Network

National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)

National Education Association

National Employment Law Project

National Recreation and Park Association
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
Natural Resources Defense Council
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
Pride at Work
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Public Health Institute
RESULTS
SchoolHouse Connection
Service Employees International Union
The Arc of the United States
The Education Trust
The Forum for Youth Investment
The Nourished Principles
Trust for America's Health
UnidosUS
We All Rise
Westside Campaign Against Hunger
Zero To Three