

# Child Nutrition Reauthorization Priorities

## SCHOOL MEALS

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) reduce hunger, improve nutrition, and support learning. In New York State, 2 million students qualify for free or reduced-price school meals through the NSLP and SBP. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 1.4 million low-income children participated in the NSLP, but only 53% of them ate breakfast through the SBP. A national survey of large districts found that in October 2020, New York schools saw a 63% decrease in breakfast participation and a 75% decrease in lunch participation. To increase access to school meals programs and move more schools to offer free school meals to all students, the reauthorization should:

- Provide all students, regardless of income, free nutritious school meals nationwide.
- Make the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) financially viable for all eligible high-poverty schools by increasing the reimbursement rate—currently 1.6%—to 2.5%.
- Streamline the eligibility and verification process by leveraging additional opportunities to directly certify low-income children for free school meals.
- Improve low-income children's access to school meals by requiring states to incorporate all categorically eligible children into current data matching systems.
- Increase SBP and NSLP reimbursement rates to match the recommended rates of the USDA School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study (April 2019).
- Allow school districts to retroactively claim and receive reimbursements back to the first day of the school year.

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Only 53% of students who eat free or reduced-price lunch also participate in breakfast.

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## SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM (SFSP)

SFSP provides healthy meals and snacks at schools, parks, libraries, recreation centers, and other sites in low-income communities, often combining meals with enrichment activities to mitigate child hunger and learning loss during the summer school break. More than 287,000 NYS children ate a summer lunch through SFSP in July 2019; however, the program reached only one in four low-income children in New York who rely on free or reduced-price school meals. To increase access to summer meals, the reauthorization should:

- Expand area eligibility from 50% to 40% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price school meals.
- Streamline and simplify program administration.
- Provide funding for mobile meals and other innovative strategies for hard-to-reach communities.
- Allow sites the option of serving a third meal.
- Establish a permanent, nationwide Summer EBT program.

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In July 2019, SFSP reached only 1 in 4 kids in NY who rely on free or reduced-price school meals.

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## CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)

CACFP provides healthy meals and snacks in childcare and afterschool settings, supporting good nutrition and high-quality, affordable childcare. It supports children's development and learning, and parents' ability to work. The most recent data show that only around half of New York's childcare centers and home-based providers participate in CACFP, and only 6.1% of NYS students who eat free or reduced-price school lunch also receive a CACFP afterschool supper. To increase access to CACFP, the reauthorization should:

- Expand At-Risk Afterschool Supper/Snack area eligibility from 50% to 40% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price school meals.
- Extend area eligibility to childcare centers.
- Allow annual eligibility for proprietary centers.
- Establish a Community Eligibility Provision option for CACFP.
- Reauthorize a paperwork reduction work group.
- Ensure reimbursement rates align with new meal patterns that strengthen the nutritional quality of meals and snacks.
- Restore centers' and homes' option to serve a third meal to children in their care for 8 hours or more.

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Only 6.1% of NYS students who eat free or reduced-price school lunch also receive a CACFP afterschool supper.

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## WIC

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a national, targeted supplemental public health nutrition program with time-limited participation. For nearly five decades, WIC has contributed to healthier pregnancies and improved birth outcomes for low-income mothers, babies, and young children up to age five. Almost half of all infants born in our nation benefit from WIC. In New York State, the program serves 365,000 (about one-half of eligible) low-income pregnant and postpartum mothers, babies, and young children at nutritional risk each month through nutritious foods, nutrition education, and referrals to other services. To increase access to WIC, the reauthorization should:

- Ensure access to WIC for all eligible families.
- Extend eligibility for children until their sixth birthday.
- Extend eligibility for postpartum women to two years.
- Extend certification periods for all participants to two years.
- Increase funding for WIC outreach.
- Modernize and streamline WIC services for families and providers.
- Expand WIC research on underserved communities.
- Protect and preserve the scientific integrity of the WIC food package.
- Support WIC's electronic benefits service delivery.

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Fewer than half of eligible women, infants and children participate in WIC.

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