



September 2, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Chairman, Education and Labor Committee
United States House of Representatives
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman, Agriculture, Nutrition &
Forestry Committee
United States Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Budget Reconciliation is a Once in a Generation Chance to Invest in Kids

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Chairman Scott, and Chairwoman Stabenow,

On behalf of Share Our Strength, we urge you to include critical anti-hunger and poverty provisions as part of the budget reconciliation bill. These provisions would help lift millions of kids out of poverty and improve their nutrition security while advancing our nation's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Share Our Strength is an organization committed to ending hunger and poverty in the United States and abroad. Through our No Kid Hungry campaign, we are helping to end hunger and food insecurity in America by connecting children and families to the federal nutrition programs for which they are eligible.

Today, more than 12 million children are living in poverty and 13 million may face hunger this year, with Black and Latino households with children much more likely to experience poverty and food hardship than White households with children. Approximately 4 in 10 families with parents who are Hispanic/Latino (39.1%) and parents who are Black (40.8%) reported food insecurity in the prior 30 days, almost triple the rate of families with White parents (15.1%). Although COVID-19 relief measures like the implementation of Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), increased SNAP benefits and the expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) have reduced food insecurity from its peak, the rate remains alarmingly high. Moreover, nutrition insecurity and child poverty are long-standing problems and therefore require long-term solutions.

Food hardship is especially pronounced during the summer months when children lose access to school meals and challenges like transportation, weather, and red tape make accessing summer meals sites challenging. In the summer of 2019, six out of seven children who received free or reduced-price meals at school were unable to access summer meals. With the demonstrated benefits of programs like Summer EBT, we can close the summer meal gap.



We have seen how the pandemic has left so many kids behind. The data demonstrates that children who live in poverty and in food insecure households are more likely than their food secure peers to have poor educational, health, and economic outcomes. We strongly encourage the inclusion of the following provisions as part of the budget reconciliation bill to help end child hunger and poverty:

Nationwide Expansion of the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (SEBTC). SEBTC provides a grocery benefit to eligible children over the summer to help them have access to nutrition when school is not in session. Evaluation of the SEBTC pilot showed that it effectively reduced food insecurity and improved diet quality among recipients. The traditional summer meals program only reaches about 1 in 7 eligible children because they are not able to overcome barriers like transportation or severe weather, or they do not have a summer meals site in their community. SEBTC ensures that children whose families are struggling financially have consistent access to nutrition during the summer months. SEBTC is a lifeline, especially for kids who live in rural communities without convenient access to summer meals sites.

Expansion of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). CEP enables schools to serve meals at no charge to all students without having to apply for free or reduced-price meals by leveraging direct certification data from other means-tested programs. CEP has many well-documented benefits, including better access to school breakfast and lunch, especially for students near the cut-off for free or reduced-price meals, improved nutrition, increased school attendance, and improved academic performance. To bring these benefits to more students in more schools, we urge you to lower the minimum Identified Student Percentage (ISP) threshold to 25% and raise the ISP multiplier to 2.5 for all grade levels. It is important for all school grade levels to have the same threshold and multiplier made available to make CEP implementation easier for schools and districts. Additionally, we ask you to improve direct certification through the nationwide use of Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income data.

Extension of the improvements to the Child Tax Credit. Columbia University researchers estimate that the expanded CTC, temporarily authorized by the American Rescue Plan, has already lifted 3 million children out of poverty. A permanent expansion of the CTC is expected to cut child poverty rates nearly in half, bringing a total of 4.1 million children — including 1.6 million Latino children and 930,000 Black children — out of poverty. Food insufficiency in households with children decreased by 3 percentage points after families received the first CTC payment in July. We must continue to build on the early successes by extending the enhanced, fully-refundable CTC.

As you consider a budget reconciliation bill, we urge you to address the urgent needs of our nation's children by expanding Summer EBT to close the summer meals gap, bringing the benefits of CEP to more students by removing administrative burdens and reaching the kids who need the



meals the most, and extending the improvements to the CTC. Through these proven investments, you can ensure that children have the nutrition they need to learn, grow and thrive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa K. Davis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L".

Lisa Davis

Senior Vice President, No Kid Hungry Campaign