



Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development
Office of Domestic Social Development

Child Nutrition Reauthorization

February 2015

“The hungry remain, at the street corner, and ask to be recognized as citizens, to receive a healthy diet. We ask for dignity, not for charity.”

--Pope Francis November, 2014

BACKGROUND

This year, Congress will begin deliberation on the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act. This will provide an opportunity to ensure that our nation invests in policies that address childhood hunger, help expectant and breastfeeding mothers, and promotes nutrition and healthy communities.

Every five years Congress reviews the laws that govern the nutrition programs contained in the Child Nutrition Act through a reauthorization process. The current law, the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*, will expire on September 30, 2015. The legislation authorizes all federal school meal and child nutrition programs. Some of USCCB’s top priorities will include:

The **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** provides nutritious food and nutrition education to low-income pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, new mothers, and infants and children up to age 5.

The **National School Lunch Program** guarantees that millions of low-income children receive a healthy lunch during their school day. All children can participate in the program, but low-income children qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Children who qualify for free or reduced-price school lunch also qualify for the School Breakfast Program.

The **School Breakfast Program** ensures that children across the country can get a healthy breakfast at school. As with the case of school lunches, children are eligible for free, reduced-price or paid breakfasts based on their families’ incomes.

The **Summer Food Service Program** ensures that children (18 and under) who depend on school lunch and breakfast during the school year, still have access to free, nutritious meals and snacks during the summer. It provides reimbursements to schools, local government agencies and private nonprofit organizations that serve free meals and snacks to children at sites located in low-income areas or that serve primarily low-income children.

The **Child and Adult Care Food Program** reimburses child care centers, *Head Start* Programs, family child care homes, homeless shelters and afterschool programs for snacks and meals served to children. Generally, children under the age of 12, as well as certain disabled adults can participate, but homeless shelters and afterschool programs can serve children 18 and under.

Although the economy is modestly improving, many low-income children and women are still struggling to make ends meet. Recent data clearly shows there is still much work to be done:

- **In 2013: 49 million people in the U.S., including 16 million children lived in food-insecure households;**
- **In 2014: Over 8 million mothers and young children participated in the WIC program; over 30 million kids participated in the National School Lunch Program and, close to 160 million meals were served in the Summer Food Service Program.**

USCCB POSITION

The U.S. bishops have long been advocates on behalf of hungry and poor people who need access to effective hunger and nutrition programs. In *For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food* (2003), the bishops stated, “Our commitment to the dignity of every person requires a special concern for those who are poor and vulnerable, whose needs are greatest, and whose lives and dignity are often threatened by hunger, poverty, and suffering.”

ACTION:

Past gains that expand eligibility and access to hunger and nutrition programs must be protected from efforts to roll them back; ensure adequate investment and resources to fund these programs. During this Congress, remain engaged in the public debate on the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act. Urge your Senators and Representative to support policies that address childhood hunger, help expectant and breastfeeding mothers, and promote nutrition and healthy communities throughout the year. Tell them:

- **Improve access and flexibility for child nutrition and school-based meal programs to respond to local needs;**
- **Invest in resources and protect from harmful cuts and changes, the hunger and nutrition programs that feed hungry children, and expectant and breastfeeding mothers, throughout the year;**
- **Protect recent gains made in eligibility and certification so that more children get the food they need for their healthy development.**

RESOURCES

- Pope Francis, “Address to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO),” November, 2014. <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-addresses-fao-nutrition-conference>
- *For I Was Hungry & You Gave Me Food: Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers*, 2003. USCCB Website: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/criminal-justice-restorative-justice/crime-and-criminal-justice.cfm>
- *Agriculture, Nutrition and Rural Issues Page*, USCCB Website: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/agriculture-nutrition-rural-issues/index.cfm>

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