

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Resolution HHH-21-02

A RESOLUTION ON SUPPORTING SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS TO COMBAT HUNGER

WHEREAS, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 29.7 million students across the country relied on free or reduced-price school meals each day;

WHEREAS, by providing needed nutrition, school meals are essential to the health and academic success of many students in normal times;

WHEREAS, even though schools closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19, many school nutrition programs continued to provide vital emergency meals to students and their families through the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year and during the summer months;

WHEREAS, from the very first hours of the crisis, school nutrition staff mobilized to get food to students through innovative models, like drive thru operations and delivery services;

WHEREAS, school meals became a lifeline to many children and families, easing the financial strain and uncertainty caused by COVID-19 economic disruptions and serving as a consistent source of food for students;

WHEREAS, to ensure that their students could access meals safely, many school nutrition programs incurred significant unexpected expenditures, including those associated with meal delivery, hazard pay for staff, personal protective equipment, and increased food procurement costs;

WHEREAS, the increased expenditures related to emergency meal service have left many school nutrition programs operating under financial strain and limiting their ability to serve meals in the 2020-2021 school year;

WHEREAS, according to the Brookings Institution, approximately 14 million children faced hunger in June, which is more than five times greater than the number in 2018 and more than double the number at the peak of the Great Recession;

WHEREAS, Black and Hispanic children experienced a disproportionately higher hunger rate at roughly 30 percent and 25 percent, respectively, compared to less than 10 percent for white children;

WHEREAS, with food insecurity continuing to rise across the country, school meals will be more important for schools in the 2020-2021 school year; and

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WHEREAS, school nutrition programs will face unique challenges in the 2020-2021 school year since school meal service may need to be adapted to meet safety recommendations or align with new models of instruction.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) urges policymakers to support school nutrition programs working to ensure that students have access to the meals they need to thrive;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NBCSL urges Congress to allocate the necessary additional funding to provide financial relief for school nutrition programs facing shortfalls due to emergency meal service;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NBCSL encourages policymakers and their membership to explore polices to bolster the efforts of school nutrition programs in serving their communities and combatting hunger during the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials and agencies as appropriate.

SPONSOR: Representative Royce Duplessis (LA)

Committee of Jurisdiction: Health and Human Services Policy Committee

Certified by Committee Co-Chairs: Representative David J. Mack, III (SC) and Senator Marilyn Moore (CT)

Ratified in Plenary Session: Ratification Date is December 3, 2020

Ratification is certified by: Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter (SC), President