

## No Kid Hungry in Action: Policy Priorities for 2021

The COVID pandemic caused a health and economic crisis in our nation, exacerbating already unacceptable levels of hunger and poverty, causing millions of families to face unemployment, food insecurity and hardship at alarming rates. As a result, an estimated 17 million children are living with hunger.

Before our nation can recover, we must ensure all children have the opportunity to be safe and nourished, and live up to their full potential. As we continue to fight the pandemic and take steps to rebuild our communities and economy, we need policies designed to address the geographic, cultural and racial inequities that have left too many behind. We know when children have access to consistent daily nutrition, their overall academic, health and economic outcomes improve.

No Kid Hungry has identified timely, actionable policy changes that can immediately begin to improve nutrition access for families, so every child can have a healthy start in life.

### Strengthen SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a monthly benefit that helps parents and caretakers buy groceries. In times of crisis, SNAP is one of the safest, most efficient ways to make sure kids get the food they need. The current program, however, isn't meeting the vast need. To reach more kids with this food, we urge lawmakers to:

- Increase the federal income eligibility level for SNAP to 200% of the federal poverty level, or \$43,000 for a family of three.
- Permanently increase SNAP benefits to more accurately reflect the costs of a nutritious diet.
- Continue to let states set more realistic asset limits for SNAP eligibility so recipients can own a reliable car or build modest emergency savings without putting their grocery benefits in jeopardy.
- Offer improved supports such as nutrition education and effective training programs to help provide more opportunities to families receiving the benefit.

### Modernize The Summer Meals Program

The federal Summer Meals program helps to feed kids at risk of hunger during the summer months, even when schools are closed. But the way the program was designed means it does not fully meet the needs of families and children today, especially those living in rural and hard-to-reach communities. In 2020, the program reached many more children by waiving program restrictions and providing families with direct benefits. We urge lawmakers to expand on this progress and:

- Permanently expand and authorize the Summer EBT program (currently a demonstration program in a handful of states), which provides families with an additional grocery benefit over the summer.
- Authorize an option for "non-congregate" sites and provide other flexibilities, allowing meals to come to children instead of requiring children to travel to centralized sites every day to eat meals.
- Reduce red tape and excessive bureaucracy by removing the duplication between afterschool and summer meals programs, making it easier for schools and community organizations to serve needed meals year-round.

### Increase the Reach of Child Nutrition Programs

Federal nutrition programs work together to feed kids, but they aren't reaching enough of the families who need them. Eliminating barriers and driving efficient, common-sense policy changes will help to ensure more children get the basic nutrition they need to grow up healthy, educated and strong. We urge lawmakers to:

- Permanently authorize the Pandemic EBT system, allowing authorities to quickly deliver increased nutritional aid during times of crisis.
- Extend the benefits of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), a policy which cuts through red tape and helps schools in high need communities offer meals at no-cost to students, by changing the eligibility structure of the program to allow more schools to participate.
- Automatically enroll families participating in WIC (the nutrition program for low-income pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five) in SNAP and school meals.