



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

This message is being sent to network public policy personnel.

### JULY 2015

While the recession may be over, the number of Americans still struggling with this basic need remains unchanged. Hunger is a symptom of lack of resources. **Unemployment, low wages, and high housing costs have been identified as the major causes of hunger.** The problem of hunger here is compounded given New Jersey's high cost of living. In addition, cuts to the benefit level of those already receiving assistance further threaten New Jersey households. Continuing to strengthen and support federal nutrition programs is more important than ever. Summary of important legislation follows.

### **The Budget Process Continues in Washington ...**

While legislation like the Farm Bill sets the framework and policy for important programs like commodity assistance (TEFAP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), these programs go through a budget and appropriations process every year. In recent years, because of the contentious debate over deficits these programs continually come under fire. The House and the Senate is in the process of reconciling their fiscal year budget with cuts to SNAP and other nutrition programs threatened. Advocates should be prepared to continue to push back against cuts to SNAP and other nutrition programs during the appropriations process throughout the summer. September 30, 2015 is the fiscal year deadline.

### **ACTION:** Join the End Hunger in America – Stories from Across Our Nation Project

It is important to continue to lay the ground work for educating our elected officials on the importance of our federal nutrition programs and put a face on the people who benefit from federal nutrition program. There is now a free and easy-to-use tool for collecting stories. The StoryCorps app allows you to record interviews right from your phone. StoryCorps will serve as a great national repository for stories that highlight the scope of hunger in America and the solutions that exist to solve it. All recorded interviews will be archived in the Library of Congress. For a StoryCorps training toolkit, email [cbsutton@frac.org](mailto:cbsutton@frac.org). Follow this link <https://storycorps.me/> to find out more or <https://storycorps.me/keywords/endhunger/> to listen to the stories already collected.

### **Improved Child Nutrition Programs**

Child Nutrition Programs will be federally reauthorized in 2015. House and Senate committees are working on a child nutrition bill. Ensuring that every member of congress understands our legislative priorities and the impact they will have on our state and district is important.

### **Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) Policy Recommendations**

- Strengthen States' Ability to Reach Kids During the Summer and weekends
- Streamline Regulations for Community Based Providers
- Leverage Schools Beyond the School Day
- Strengthen Access and Quality in School Meal Programs and WIC

**ACTION:** In anticipation of CNR, several marker bills have been introduced (see below). Ask you member of Congress to co-sponsor one of these important pieces of legislation that would allow more children to be fed over the critical summer months when they are out of school and do not have access to school meals. The Community FoodBank of New Jersey joins Feeding America and FRAC in urging Congress to help close the large summer meal gap. Visit **FRAC link for email co-sponsor requests <http://frac.org/leg-act-center/>**

The **Summer Meals Act of 2015** (House bill H.R.1278 / S613) introduced by Senators Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Representatives Don Young (R-AK) and Rick Larsen (D-WA) this March would strengthen, protect, and expand access to the Summer Nutrition Programs. This Act would lower the area eligibility test to 40% (from 50%) allowing community-based organizations to increase participation when children in the area are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, allow local government agencies and private nonprofit organizations to feed children year-round through the Summer Food Service Program, provide funding for transportation grants to fund innovative approaches and mobile meal trucks and allow all sites to add a third meal strengthening programs serving working families.

The **Stop Child Summer Hunger Act of 2015** (House bill H.R.2715 / S1539) introduced by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Representative Susan Davis (D-CA) this June would increase participation in the summer meal program by allowing eligible children another way to access summer meals. Under this Act, families who have children eligible for free and reduced-price school meals would receive an electronic benefit (EBT) card to purchase food to replace the meals that children would otherwise be receiving at school. The legislation is modeled after a USDA summer pilot project that was carried out in eight states from 2011 to 2014. The pilot project displayed incredible impacts on child hunger, decreasing child food insecurity by a third and increasing children's nutritional intake of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and dairy products. The EBT model is intended to work in coordination with other summer feeding models that provide meals through community sponsors or schools.

### **State Update:**

Sadly in New Jersey child nutrition programs are seriously under-utilized. The school breakfast program, for instance, provides free or reduced-price breakfasts for children in need. It has a proven track record of enhancing academic performance and improving child health behavior. Despite the progress made in recently years, of the 519,000 New Jersey students eligible for school breakfast, only 41% received it leaving 308,000 children unserved and millions of dollars in federal funds on the table. Similarly the summer feeding program served only 85,000 children in 2014, reaching only 18% of those eligible.

**ACTION:** To increase participation in School Breakfast or Summer Feeding in your district join the Food for Thought Campaign sponsored by the Advocates for Children in New Jersey Advocates <http://acnj.org>.

Ask your state representatives to support the expansion of School Breakfast both fiscally and administratively. By investing state funds to reinstate supplemental funding, New Jersey can provide incentives to adopt "breakfast after the bell" policies in each district. Legislation **A4030 and S2669** establishes a "breakfast after the bell" incentive fund of .10 cents per meal and is moving through committees. Both federal and state elected official contact information can be found easily using your zip code thanks to the League of Women Voters. Visit <http://lwv.org/> website and follow the prompts on the Right hand side of page: **Contact Elected Officials**

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