



NANA Child Nutrition Priorities

Child nutrition programs can improve health and wellness, reduce childhood hunger, promote healthy weight in childhood, enhance child development and instill lifelong healthy habits. Congress must preserve and invest in child nutrition programs to ensure that all children have the nutrition they need to grow up healthy.

As members of the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA), partner organizations urge the 119th Congress to:

1. Preserve and strengthen evidence-based nutrition standards for child nutrition programs, provide funds for technical assistance and mandate transparency on progress towards meeting them;
2. Preserve and strengthen access to child nutrition programs;
3. Support and strengthen programs and policies that help operators succeed in providing nutritious meals and snacks;
4. Support and strengthen strong, comprehensive, culturally appropriate, and well-coordinated nutrition education programs; and
5. Help foster a healthy food environment in schools and childcare facilities through supportive policies.

Recommendation #1: Congress must preserve and strengthen evidence-based nutrition standards for child nutrition programs, provide funds for technical assistance and mandate transparency on progress towards meeting them.

- Support the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in its work to ensure children get the healthiest food possible.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP)

- Oppose efforts that weaken evidence-based school nutrition standards. Legislating requirements for specific nutrients or carving out specific food items sets a precedent that serves to undermine the integrity of school meals. For example, NANA opposes the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025 (119th: S. 222/H.R. 649) as this effort circumvents this science-based process and instead acts as a handout for the dairy industry.
- Renew the USDA's Healthy Meals Incentive Initiative, including School Food System Transformation Challenge Sub-Grants which help invest in regional food systems including rural farmers, as well as Healthy Meals Incentive grants for school that facilitate more local and freshly prepared meals in school kitchens.

- Require a report on the USDA’s technical assistance efforts on sodium, whole grain-rich, and added sugars. This should describe both progress by schools to meet the standards and efforts by the USDA to work with industry to provide products that meet the standards. Similar language was included in the FY2021 House agriculture appropriations bill.
- Provide at least \$23 million total in funding for robust technical assistance to aid schools in meeting the sodium, whole grain-rich, and added sugars standards. The FY2024 agriculture appropriations bill provided \$18 million for school meals technical assistance.
- Require greater transparency from the USDA for nutrition standards compliance such as requiring the USDA to annually post the seven-cent certification data for schools. The USDA last publicly posted this data in 2016, after years of updating these figures quarterly.
- Direct USDA to promote and provide technical assistance to operators on how to implement options for local purchasing clarified in the *Final Rule - Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 DGAs* (7 CFR §§ 210, 215, 220, 225, and 226).

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)

- Maintain the FFVP as fresh-only and expand to more students. Allow only fresh fruits and vegetables to be offered to ensure access and exposure. Expand the program to reach more children with the goal of making it available to all elementary students.

Recommendation #2: Congress must preserve and strengthen access to child nutrition programs.

- Support Tribal implementation of nutrition programs. Allow Tribal Organizations the authority to directly provide child nutrition programs beyond Summer EBT. Tribes understand the needs of their communities best, especially when it comes to ensuring children have consistent, healthy, and nutritious meals through schools, childcare, and community-based programs all year long.

Summer Meals (SUN Bucks and SUN Meals)

- Encourage all US states, territories, and Tribal Organizations to participate so families of schoolchildren receive nutrition benefits when schools are closed. Built off the success of the Summer EBT demonstration pilots and Pandemic EBT program, the 2024 launch of the Summer EBT program provided families in 37 states, the District of Columbia, 5 territories, and 2 Tribal Organizations with resources to purchase food, replacing meals that children would have received through nutrition programs during the school year.
- Increase the number of children who have access to nutritious meals via the summer nutrition programs through the Summer Meals Act of 2024 (H.R. 9406). Improve area eligibility requirements so that more communities can provide

summer and afterschool meals and streamline program operations to reduce unnecessary red tape.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

- Streamline participant access by permanently allowing remote certifications and telehealth appointments with the MODERN WIC Act of 2025 (H.R. 1464); extending certification periods to two years; enhance adjunctive eligibility and referral networks; and invest in WIC’s Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program and technology projects.
- Expand eligibility for postpartum women to two years and extend child eligibility until age six consistent with the bipartisan Wise Investment in our Children Act of 2023 (WIC Act) (S. 1604/H.R. 3364).
- Modernize program services by relaxing regulatory barriers, instituting a deadline for scaling up online shopping options for WIC families, and enhancing the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

- Strengthen, modernize, and expand CACFP. Allow annual eligibility for proprietary centers; improve the area eligibility test; streamline program requirements; reduce paperwork burden and maximize technology to improve program access; provide more technical assistance and continue funding for USDA’s CACFP nutrition education; and make permanent CACFP eligibility for homeless young adults up to the age of 24. Many of these provisions are in the Access to Healthy Foods for Young Children Act of 2021 (S. 1270).
- Allow CACFP providers who are open for more than 8 hours a day to receive reimbursement for an additional meal (up to 3 meals and 1 snack), as reflected in the Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act of 2024 (S. 4002/H.R. 6007).
- Support the child care infrastructure to ensure access to quality care for working families as well as fair compensation for child care providers.

Recommendation #3: Support and strengthen programs and policies that help operators succeed in providing nutritious meals and snacks.

NSLP and SBP

- Increase school breakfast reimbursement by 15 cents and school lunch reimbursement by 40 cents.
- Increase the performance-based reimbursement from seven cents to ten cents.
- Clarify that school food service workers are to be paid during professional training. Include the Improving Training for School Food Service Workers Act of 2023 (S. 2460, H.R. 4844). Training is critical to ensure that workers are able to meet nutrition standards successfully.
- Include the bipartisan The School Food Modernization Act of 2023 (H.R. 4483), which would permanently authorize school kitchen equipment grants and loans for no less than \$35 million, as well as codifying a reduction in the grant threshold

amount from \$5,000 to \$1,000. Promote the use of kitchen equipment funds to support more fresh meal preparation and scratch cooking.

- Include the Scratch Cooked Meals for Students Act of 2024 (H.R.7748) which would grant \$100 million over 5 years to support scratch cooking in schools, including professional development, kitchen equipment, and technical assistance.
- Direct USDA to fully reinstate and honor the Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program for new and continuing states and explore options for continued funding for the Local Food For Schools Cooperative Agreement, and build on learnings, models, and best practices from the innovative models established by states using the previous rounds.
- *Increase funding for and related TA for USDA Foods in Schools.* Provide increased funding for commodities, particularly for breakfast, building on and increasing the \$20 million provided through FY2024 agriculture appropriations. This would help ease the fiscal burden for programs, support American growers and producers, and provide more healthy options for schools. Support funding for TA on best practices for utilizing commodities.

CACFP

- Provide an additional 10 cent reimbursement for each meal and snack served in the CACFP as proposed in the Child Care Nutrition Enhancement Act of 2023 (S. 3294, H.R. 5569).
- Align the calculation of CACFP reimbursement rates for family child care homes with that of centers by shifting to “food away from home” and eliminate tiering of family day care homes.
- Incorporate additional supports for child care homes and centers to expand scratch-cooking abilities for meal services.
- Continue support for Farm to Early Care and Education (F2ECE) in USDA and CDC population health intervention projects.
- Direct USDA to fully reinstate and honor the Local Food for Schools – Child Care Cooperative Agreement Program for new and continuing states and explore options for continued funding for the Local Food For Schools – Child Care Cooperative Agreement, and build on learnings, models, and best practices from the innovative models established by states using the previous rounds.

Recommendation #4: Support and strengthen strong, comprehensive, culturally appropriate, and well-coordinated nutrition education programs.

- Increase state grants by five percent for the SNAP Obesity Prevention and Nutrition Education Grant Program (SNAP-Ed). SNAP-Ed is an evidence-based program that helps SNAP participants lead healthier lives. An increase in SNAP-Ed funding is needed to enhance nutrition education efforts, social marketing campaigns, and improve policies, systems, and the environment of communities, including through state and county farm to school activities.

- Include the Food and Nutrition Education in Schools Act of 2021 (S. 1421/H.R. 4282) which provides funding for the USDA to establish a pilot grant program to create food and nutrition education positions in a range of rural, urban, and Tribal schools. Food and nutrition educators will implement evidence-based practices proven to maximize students’ consumption—and enjoyment—of healthy meals. Priority will be given to schools in neighborhoods with high rates of childhood diet-related illnesses and schools in which 40 percent or more of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals.
- Allow nutrition education programs to include physical activity promotion strategies in alignment with the most recent DGA recommendations.
- Establish and financially support a formal coordination mechanism that promotes effective collaboration among nutrition professionals across the federal, regional and state agencies.

Recommendation #5: Congress must help to foster a healthy food environment in schools and childcare facilities through supportive policies.

- Support schools in expanding plant-based meal options and remove barriers for students to access non-dairy milk options through policy such as the Healthy Future Students and Earth Pilot Program Act of 2023 (H.R. 3276). For all students to access healthy meals at school, we must ensure the availability of plant-based meal options and non-dairy milk for students who require or prefer these options due to medical (e.g. lactose intolerance), religious, philosophical or other reasons.
- *Ensure access to safe drinking water.* Improve drinking water accessibility by ensuring that all schools have at least one water bottle filling station in a high-traffic area accessible throughout the day, with filtration if needed, and, when feasible, ensure availability of cups or reusable bottles for filling. Endorsed by: Bipartisan Policy Center, National Drinking Water Alliance, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources. In school nutrition programs, request USDA report to Congress on ways in which they have added specific checkpoints to on-site Administrative Review, ensuring effective oversight of drinking water safety and access. In CACFP, request that USDA report to Congress on ways in which they have added specific checkpoints to CACFP monitoring site visit instruction to ensure effective oversight of drinking water safety beyond CACFP’s already excellent requirements for drinking water access.
- Fund food waste reduction efforts in schools through the School Food Recovery Act of 2021 (H.R. 5459), which would support efforts to measure, prevent, and reduce food waste in schools.
- Congress and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have recently taken steps to improve school and childcare drinking water safety. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 expanded the existing Voluntary School and Child Care Program Lead Testing Grant Program by adding compliance monitoring and remediation of lead contamination in drinking water, with \$200M authorized over 5 years. The EPA Lead and Copper Rule Revision (LCRI), released in October 2024,

reduced the “action level” for lead in water from 15 parts per billion (ppb) to 10 ppb and requires all community water systems to offer tap water testing for lead to all elementary schools and childcare sites constructed before 2014.

- [For reference, overview of LCRI for schools and childcare facilities](#)

- Prohibit lunch shaming and other means of reprimanding or identifying students with unpaid school lunch debt by including the No Shame at School Act of 2024 (S. 5200/H.R. 9878)
- Include the bipartisan The Farm to School Act of 2023 (S. 3129/H.R. 6308), which would increase funding for farm-to-school by \$15 million; increase the maximum allotted grant amount to \$500,000; and expand access for early care, summer, after school, adult care programs, and Tribal programs.