

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Recommendations for Child Nutrition Reauthorization

Updated September 2026

The Academy recognizes that child nutrition programs play a vital role in improving health and well-being, reducing childhood hunger, supporting healthy growth and development, and fostering lifelong healthy habits. Congress has a responsibility to preserve, invest in, and expand the reach of federal child nutrition programs, which provide a system of nutrition support and are a critical line of defense against food insecurity for millions of children across the United States. These programs have not been fully reauthorized since 2010.

The Academy supports and advocates for the following recommendations, many of which are largely aligned with the National Alliance for Nutrition & Activity's [\(NANA\) Child Nutrition Priorities](#).

Academy Recommendations	Corresponding Child Nutrition Program Legislation Supported by the Academy
Preserve and strengthen evidence-based nutrition standards for child nutrition programs ● Oppose efforts that weaken evidence-based school nutrition standards., such as the 2024 final rule on sodium reduction and added sugars. ● Support a study to determine the feasibility of a single meal pattern and single reimbursement rate across all child nutrition feeding programs. ● Renew the USDA's Healthy Meals Incentive Initiative, including sub-grants which help invest in regional food systems including rural farmers, as well as Healthy Meals Incentive grants for schools that facilitate more local and freshly prepared meals in school kitchens. ● Require a report on the USDA's technical assistance to schools' efforts on implementation of sodium, whole grain-rich, and added sugars standards.	

- 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.
- Provide funding for technical assistance to implement the new *2025-2030 Dietary Guideline* requirements for schools.
- 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.
- 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).

Nutrition Education and Promotion

- Increase research that provides evidence-based improvements for comprehensive, culturally appropriate and nationwide nutrition education and promotion approaches that foster healthy behaviors, educational attainment, and lifelong health for all children
- Support and increase funds to ensure that strong, comprehensive, and culturally appropriate nutrition education and promotion are included in the authorization and then provided for all child nutrition programs
- Provide adequate funds to help all states build a state-level leadership infrastructure for comprehensive nutrition education and promotion led by qualified professionals, in which every state would develop a nutrition education and promotion plan to promote, coordinate, and provide nutrition education and promotion, and leadership training in all child nutrition programs
- Support efforts to make policy, systems, and environmental changes to maximize the impact of nutrition education and promotion.
- Maintain and strengthen WIC Nutrition Education, including breastfeeding support

- Invest in and establish an evidence-based national nutrition education and physical activity program that helps states and communities (i.e. schools) support healthy eating, physical activity, disease prevention and long-term health.
- Include physical activity promotion strategies in nutrition education programs
- Establish and financially support a formal coordination mechanism that promotes effective collaboration among nutrition professionals across the federal, regional, and state agencies.

National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support an increase in reimbursement for school breakfast, school lunch, and snack programs. ● Give permanent authority to USDA Secretary to provide waivers and flexibilities during a declared emergency ● Support evidence-based meal and nutrition standards, which are reviewed and updated as necessary and on an established timeline ● Support and amplify the voices of Academy members leading the way in providing healthy, appealing school meals to children ● Support strong professional standards requirements for school nutrition professionals. ● Provide adequate funding for schools to purchase, prepare, and serve healthy, quality foods and beverages for school meals and snacks ● Provide USDA support for the School Breakfast Program ● Provide adequate funding to USDA to provide training and technical assistance to support maintenance and attainment of nutrition standards, as well as the skills necessary to run a successful program. Clarify that school food service workers are to be paid during professional training. ● Increase funding mechanisms for updated infrastructure and equipment to school kitchens. 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School Food Modernization and Hunger Elimination Act (S. 1431) ● School Food Modernization Act (H.R. 5731) ● Universal School Meals Program Act (S. 4518, H.R. 8798) ● CARE for KIDS Act (H.R. 4451) ● The Expanding Access to School Meals Act (H.R. 2680) ● Feed Hungry Kids Act (H.R. 5128) ● No Hungry Kids in School Act (H.R. 2402) ● The Kids Need Lunch Act (H.R. 7542) ● Healthy Meals Help Kids Learn Act (H.R. 5753) ● No Shame at School Act (S. 2944/H.R. 5655) |
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from \$5,000 to \$1,000. Promote the use of kitchen equipment funds to support more fresh meal preparation and scratch cooking.

- Pause enforcement of the Paid Lunch Equity provision of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act pending USDA of declining National School Lunch Program participation.
- Ensure equal and equitable school meals by supporting healthy school meals for all and the Community Eligibility Provision.
- Urge USDA and the US Department of Education to develop best practices and guidance to ensure school schedules provide students adequate time (a minimum of 35 minutes) to eat healthy school meals.
- Direct USDA to fully reinstate and honor the Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program for both new and existing participating states. In addition, explore opportunities for sustained funding that build on the lessons learned, successful models, and best practices developed through previous rounds of the program.
- Increase funding for and related technical assistance 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.

- Improving Training for School Food Service Workers Act (S. 1736, H.R. 3367)
- Scratch Cooked Meals for Students Act (S. 4599, H.R. 8928)

Summer Nutrition Programs

- Strengthen and improve access to and participation in summer meal programs by expanding access to the rural non-congregate feeding program.
- Support efforts to and funding for partnerships and collaboration between the public and private sectors to promote innovative approaches to feeding children in the summer, especially among rural or remote areas and other high-risk areas where summer meal participation has been low
- Permanently fund and expand Summer EBT to all states, territories, and Tribal Organizations, increase the benefit amount, and streamline enrollment.
- Reduce administrative red tape so that more communities can provide summer and afterschool meals and streamline program operations.

- Stop Child Hunger Act (S. 1622, H.R. 3217)
- Bridge to Summer Nutrition Act (H.R. 6819)
- Summer Meals REACH Act (S. 2559, H.R. 9587)

Special Supplemental Nutrition Programs for Women, Infants, and Children

- Support efforts to invest in improvements to information systems and technology to better serve WIC participants, including documentation transfer, online, texting, telehealth and app tools to support breast-feeding and nutrition education, and enhance the clinic and shopping experience
- Support nutrition and breastfeeding counseling as successful cost-effective health care services
- Support an evidence-based, prescriptive WIC Food Package
- Support expansion of funding for breastfeeding peer counseling services
- Continue to support efforts to conduct program evaluation including data collection, research, training of staff, and innovation
- Support programmatic changes that will improve maternal and child health outcomes
- Promote and expand WIC Farmers Market Program
- Provide funding stability for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program vouchers and reject any "funding cliffs" that would put eligible mothers and children on waiting lists.
- Support for expansion of WIC on tribal lands and indigenous food access
- Streamline participant access by permanently allowing the option for remote certifications and telehealth appointments, extending certification periods to two years; enhancing adjunctive eligibility and referral networks; and investing in WIC's Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program and technology projects.
- 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.

- Wise Investment in Children (WIC) Act
- MODERN WIC Act (H.R. 1464)
- 21st Century WIC Act (S. 3842)

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

- Support the successful implementation of the new healthier nutrition standards for meals and snacks in CACFP

- Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act (S. 1447/H.R. 2818)

• Support adequate funding for CACFP nutrition and wellness education and other training efforts led by qualified staff • Support efforts to increase access to reimbursable meals and snacks for children in full day child care • Streamline access to healthy meals for all children, such as those identified in the CACFP Paperwork Reduction Report • Make permanent CACFP eligibility for young adults experiencing homelessness or housing instability up to the age of 24. • 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) • Support the childcare infrastructure to ensure access to quality care for working families as well as fair compensation for child care providers. • Provide an additional 20 cent reimbursement for each meal and 10 cent reimbursement for each snack served in the CACFP. • Align the calculation of CACFP reimbursement rates for family childcare homes with that of centers by shifting to “food away from home” and eliminate tiering of family day care homes. • Incorporate additional supports for childcare homes and centers to expand scratch-cooking abilities for meal services. • Support 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.	• Child Care Nutrition Enhancement Act (S. 1420, H.R. 2859)
Farm to School Grant Program • Provide funding and support to build upon the success of and growing demand for the Farm to School Grant Program, including continued expansion to early care and education settings, summer, after-school, and tribal communities	• Farm to School Act (S. 3127/HR. 6065)

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program • Strengthen and expand the reach of the successful Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to more schools with higher free and reduced percentages that will support a reduction in chronic disease through improved dietary quality. • Support the current criteria for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program by requiring that all fruits and vegetables provided must be fresh	
Foster a Healthy Food Environment in Schools and Child Care Facilities • Support schools in expanding plant-based meal options and remove barriers for students to access nutritionally equivalent (to dairy) fortified soy milk and non-dairy milk options that meet nutrition standards. • Ensure access to safe drinking water. Ensure that all schools have at least one water bottle filling station. • Support efforts to measure, prevent, and reduce food waste in schools. • Prohibit lunch shaming and other means of reprimanding or identifying students with unpaid school lunch debt.	• No Shame at School Act (S. 2944/H.R. 5655)