

# THE BUILD BACK BETTER ACT

The Build Back Better Plan Act is a large piece of legislation that includes provisions that aim to invest \$10 billion to ensure child nutrition security. This legislation will update the Community Eligibility Provision for schools and school districts, expand the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer program for households with eligible children and invest in updated kitchen equipment and school nutrition innovation. Summaries on each of these programs and their impact on child nutrition are below.

## Community Eligibility Provision

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a non-pricing meal service option for schools and school districts in low-income areas that serve breakfast and lunch free of charge.<sup>1</sup> CEP is a reimbursable program for students participating in means-tested programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). This investment in child nutrition will lower the eligibility threshold for schools recording Identified Student Percentages through means-tested programs from 40% to 25%<sup>2</sup> and increase the multiplier factor from 1.6 to 2.5<sup>3</sup> to reach nearly 9 million more children with free school meals. States will also be given the option to apply for state-wide breakfast and lunch CEP to all schools. The implementation of both the threshold and multiplier adjustments will be in place for school years beginning 2022-2026.

## Summer EBT Program

The Build Back Better Act looks to provide more children with healthy meals over the summer through the expansion of the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (Summer EBT) benefits to eligible low-income children. For summers 2023 and 2024, the proposed benefits would give an amount equal to \$65 for each child in the eligible household (a household with an eligible child) per month during the summer. In the following years, the amount would be adjusted to the lowest nearest dollar equal to the thrifty food plan. Under this provision, schools will be able to automatically enroll eligible children in the program without requiring additional applications. Recipients would be able to use their Summer EBT benefits to purchase approved items from retailers.

## Kitchen Equipment and School Nutrition Innovation

The Build Back Better Act includes \$30 million available as grants to be awarded to states under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act for equipment purchases necessary to serve healthier meals, improve food safety, and increase scratch cooking. Additionally, \$250 million will be available for school nutrition innovation in the form of nutrition education, technical assistance to meet and exceed nutrition guidelines and procure local foods.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

The Build Back Better Act is an important step in securing adequate and healthy nutrition for our nation's youth. Strong childhood nutrition standards have been associated with favorable education results, better health outcomes, and improved social competencies. This legislation is an investment in our children and America's future.

1. Community Eligibility Provision. (2019, 4 19). Retrieved from USDA Food and Nutrition Service: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/community-eligibility-provision>

2. The Identified Student Percentage (ISP) refers to the percentage of students within a school who are directly certified for free meals because their families participate in means-tested programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or Medicaid, or are migrant, homeless, enrolled in Head Start, or in foster care.

3. The Community Eligibility multiplier is applied to the ISP calculate the percentage of school breakfasts and lunches served that will be reimbursed at the free rate. Meals not reimbursed at the free rate are reimbursed at the paid rate.