

The Universal School Meals Program Act of 2021

(S. 1530/H.R. 3115)

About Us

Representing more than 112,000 credentialed nutrition and dietetics practitioners, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. The Academy is committed to improving the nation's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy.

Overview

The Universal School Meals Program Act of 2021 was introduced in the 117th U.S. Congress (S. 1530/H.R. 3115) by U.S. Sens. Bernie Sanders (Vt.) and Kirsten Gillibrand (N.Y.) and by U.S. Reps. Ilhan Omar (Minn.) and Gwen Moore (Wis.). This bill aims to increase access to healthy meals to school age children throughout the entire year by strengthening provisions in several child nutrition programs including: The School Breakfast Program, The National School Lunch Program, the Afterschool Nutrition Programs, The Summer Food Service Program and The Child and Adult Care Food Program.

What Does the Universal School Meals Program Act of 2021 Propose?

- Permanently provide free school breakfast and lunch to all children instead of just those living in homes with incomes below 130% of the poverty line
- Increase school breakfast and school lunch reimbursements to match the recommended rates of USDA's School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study (\$2.72 for breakfast and \$3.81 for lunch and dinner)
- Provide a 30-cent reimbursement per lunch incentive for schools that obtain 30% of their food from local sources (within 250 miles of the purchasing School Food Authority)
- Reimburse schools for their delinquent meal debt
- Provide free afterschool and summer meals and snacks to all children instead of just to those living in an area where 50 percent or more of children are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals
- Expand Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer to all low-income children so that families would receive a monthly benefit of \$60 per month per child to purchase food for three months
- Provide three meals a day and a snack at no charge to children in child care instead of the current two meals and a snack at no charge

Why Does The Academy Support This Bill?

Healthy meals for school age children are as important to learning as textbooks and pencils. The Academy believes an investment in universal school meals is an investment in our country's future. It is the position of the Academy that access to enough food for an active, healthy life is a basic human need and fundamental right and that children and adolescents should have access to an adequate supply of healthful and safe foods that promote optimal physical, cognitive and social growth and development. The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the need to provide access to healthy meals to children year-round, especially given its disproportionate impact on people with diet-related diseases and communities of color. Investing in strong school nutrition programs to help establish life-long healthy eating habits is more important than ever.

Co-sponsor the Universal School Meals Program Act

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics urges members of Congress to co-sponsor and support the Universal School Meals Program Act.

To become a co-sponsor, please contact:

Sen. Sanders' office: Billy_Gendell@budget.senate.gov

Rep. Omar's office: Maria.Martirosyan@mail.house.gov

iHolben D, Berger M. 2017, December. Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Food insecurity in the United States. J Acad Nutr Diet. 2017;117(2):1991-2002.