

MINORITY VIEWS
H.R. 5003, the Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016
114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION
December 7, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Committee Democrats strongly oppose H.R. 5003, *the Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016*. During its consideration by the Full Committee on May 18, 2016, all Democratic Members in attendance voted in opposition to reporting the legislation. Committee Democrats strongly feel that efforts to reauthorize child nutrition programs present a valuable opportunity to continue to improve the eating habits of children, expand their access to nutritious meals, and alleviate the child hunger crisis in our country. A responsible reauthorization would make progress toward these goals and improve the school meals programs for the benefit of those they are intended to serve.

A child nutrition reauthorization that makes progress toward eliminating childhood hunger and food insecurity is not and should not be an impossible nor partisan goal. Rather than moving us forward, H.R. 5003 would roll back access to and availability of nutritious meals, putting at risk the current and future health of millions of schoolchildren. The partisan legislation introduced by Committee Republicans charts a path that ignores scientific research and uses rhetoric of reduced federal involvement to justify broad, irresponsible changes to programs with demonstrated efficacy. The Republican reauthorization means increased burden on schools and families who participate in school meals programs, the ability for states to restrict who is eligible for school meals through a pilot block grant program, and weakened nutrition standards for the foods that fuel our nation's children and students.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FEDERAL CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

The passage of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry S. Truman in 1946, created the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) to bolster national security threatened by rampant malnutrition among prospective military recruits. Over the last seventy years, this established federal role has expanded to include nutritional support for eligible children during breakfast and after school, over the summer, and in child care centers or provider homes, as well as nutritional support for mothers, infants, and young children through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

The national security purpose for which the National School Lunch Program was first created remains as important today as it was seventy years ago. In the twenty-first century, malnutrition and food insecurity remain a threat to our nation's youth. According to the Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, 7.8 percent of U.S. households with children (3 million households) experienced food insecurity in 2015. These households were at times unable to provide adequate, nutritious food for their children during the year.¹ School meal programs serve as a major component of the nutrition safety net for our nation's students and families, providing them with nutritious foods and protecting them from falling further into poverty. In fact, the Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure demonstrates that nutrition

¹ USDA ERS, *Household Food Security in the United States in 2015*, Economic Research Report No. (ERR-215), (September 2016) available at: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/err215/err-215.pdf>

programs, such as the school lunch program and the WIC program, have a tangible and measurable impact in alleviating poverty.²

There is a federal role in ensuring every child has access to healthy and nutritious food and is able to learn without the burden of hunger. Child nutrition programs provide not only a health benefit to children, but these programs also help ensure students are able to grow, both physically and intellectually. Studies from peer-reviewed journals on cognitive function and pediatrics describe how nutritional deficiencies and increases in the intake of nutrients can affect various brain functions, including cognition, concentration, perception, intuition, and reasoning. These studies also find that healthier students are likely to have fewer absences and disciplinary issues. Research published in the *Journal of School Health and American Journal of Diseases of Children* found that programs focused on improving students' health are associated with increased test scores.³

The benefits of a healthy diet at a young age extend beyond childhood. There is a large body of research demonstrating the importance of consistent access to nutritious food to support the health and wellbeing of children from early childhood through adulthood, which could result in substantial long-term savings in health care and education.⁴

H.R. 5003 ERODES SCIENCE-BASED NUTRITION STANDARDS

The previous bipartisan reauthorization of child nutrition programs, *the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*, introduced strong meal nutrition standards for foods served at schools, both during and outside the traditional meal service. The improvements in nutrition standards ensure that children are exposed to healthy foods and can begin forming healthy eating habits while in school. The new standards are based on scientific evidence – the Dietary Guidelines for Americans as well as the recommendations from nutrition experts at the Institute of Medicine. The standards are tailored to age groups and maintain flexibility for schools in their meal planning process. In short, the standards reflect the best available evidence about how to design and offer healthy and nutritious meals, snacks, and beverages for students, while still allowing for flexibility for schools on how to achieve compliance.

The standards enacted in the wake of the 2010 reauthorization have resulted in healthier school environments across the country. According to researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health, the new federal standards have led to increased fruit and vegetable consumption.⁵ Further, according to a three year study conducted by the Center for Public Health Nutrition at the University of Washington's School of Public Health, after the healthier standards were in place, the overall nutritional quality of the foods chosen by students increased by 29 percent and

² United States Census Bureau. *The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2015*, (September 13, 2016) available at: <http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-258.pdf>

³ M.D. Florence, M. Asbridge, & P.J. Veugelers. "Diet Quality and Academic Performance," *Journal of School Health*, (April 2008) available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18336680>

⁴ J.T. Cook & A. Poblacion. *Estimating the Health-Related Costs of Food Insecurity and Hunger*. Appendix of The Nourishing Effect: Ending Hunger, Improving Health, Reducing Inequality, (2015) available at: http://www.childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/JohnCook_cost_of_hunger_study.pdf

⁵ J. F.W. Cohen, S. Richardson, E. Parker, P. J. Catalano, & E. B. Rimm. "Impact of the New U.S. Department of Agriculture School Meal Standards on Food Selection, Consumption, and Waste," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (March 4, 2014).

the calorie content per gram decreased by 13 percent. In spite of claims to the contrary, this study also found that there was no impact on participation rates.⁶

Through the hard work of many actors at the local, state, and federal levels, the improved nutrition standards are in place at over 98 percent of NSLP-participating schools.⁷ The standards are not only widely adopted by schools, but are also widely supported by families; 90 percent of Americans support the current national school nutrition standards, with similar levels of support for maintaining or strengthening the nutrition standards.⁸

Ignoring the widespread success and adoption of the new nutrition standards, H.R. 5003 contains provisions that threaten these federal standards. The legislation proposes a three-year review of the nutrition standards by the United States Department of Agriculture, with the first review to be conducted almost immediately. The reviews would require the Department to certify that the regulations meet specific criteria. For example, certification must prove that nutrition standards are not responsible for either increased costs or decreased program participation. This shortsighted approach allows other factors— that could be entirely unrelated to the nutrition programs themselves, such as population changes, inflation, or demographic shifts – to negate the fundamental importance of science-based standards. The nutrition of students’ meals could therefore be compromised by a regulatory process devoid of science. Ranking Member Scott offered an amendment to strike the three-year review, keeping the current apolitical, science-based review system in place, but this amendment was defeated by a partisan vote.

H.R. 5003 also makes changes to current law and regulations regarding the service of “a la carte” items. H.R. 5003 would allow any entree that was part of a reimbursable meal to be served as an a la carte item any day of the week. This allowance undermines the structure of the current nutrition standards, where average weekly meal targets for fat, calories, and sodium must be met. This provision has the effect of allowing high-fat, high-calorie, and/or high-sodium food items that might be an appropriate part of a weekly average – but not a daily meal component – to be served at any point, eroding the intent of the nutrition standards that students be served nutritionally balanced meals each day. Ms. Bonamici offered an amendment striking the a la carte change, but it was defeated by a partisan vote.

Committee Democrats recognize that legislators are not, in general, nutrition experts or medical professionals and that any changes to federal nutrition standards should be grounded in scientific data. Congress is not the appropriate venue for the current science-based process for determining nutrition standards. The above-mentioned changes to nutrition standards proposed in H.R. 5003, among others, represent a challenge to the standards as a whole, allowing less healthy foods in schools. Subcommittee Ranking Member Fudge also offered an amendment that would prohibit the bill from taking effect if it would: (1) lead to less healthy foods being available in schools; or, (2) make it more difficult for schools to serve free meals to all students. Committee Democrats unanimously supported this amendment, but it was also defeated.

⁶ Donna Johnson, Mary Podrabsky, Anita Rocha, JJ. Otten, “Effect of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act on the Nutritional Quality of Meals Selected by Students and School Lunch Participation Rates,” *JAMA Pediatrics* (January 4, 2016) available at: <http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/article-abstract/2478057>

⁷ USDA. *School Meal Certification Data*, (October 19, 2016) available at: http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/SFACert_FY16Q3.pdf

⁸ W.K. Kellogg Foundation. *Food for Thought 2015*, available at: <http://ww2.wkkf.org/2015schoolfoodpoll/>

H.R. 5003 THREATENS ACCESS TO SCHOOLS MEALS

Community Eligibility Provision

H.R. 5003 proposes drastic changes to a successful provision in the 2010 reauthorization that provides access to free, nutritious meals to millions of students from low-income families. In the 2015-2016 school year, the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allowed more than 18,000 schools across the country to serve free, universal, healthy school meals to 8.5 million children without the stigma or burden of paperwork.⁹ Now in just its third year of nationwide availability, CEP has proven to be a powerful tool that allows school districts to provide easier access to nutritious meals for children in high-poverty schools and high-poverty areas. It simplifies the meal program eligibility for schools and administrators by allowing schools to offer breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students while eliminating applications and tracking eligibility in the lunch line. Additionally, CEP simplifies the process for students and families by alleviating the burden of filling out a school meals application that is often redundant for families who are receiving benefits from a similar income-based program.

Under federal law, certain students are automatically enrolled for free meals without an application because they are at special risk for food insecurity and other consequences of living in poverty, such as children living in households receiving SNAP benefits or children who are homeless. These especially vulnerable students are referred to as “identified students” because they have been identified by other programs as especially vulnerable. Schools in which 40 percent or more of the students are identified students can adopt community eligibility. But identified students are only a subset of those who would qualify for free or reduced-price meals if the school collected school meal applications. Schools in which 40 to 60 percent of students are identified as automatically eligible for free meals typically have 64 to 96 percent of their students approved for free or reduced-price meals.¹⁰ This difference occurs because some children, for example, do not participate in one of the programs that confer automatic eligibility. H.R. 5003 would increase this threshold to 60 percent, potentially affecting the eligibility of thousands of schools and taking away free, healthy meals from millions of children.¹¹

Committee Republicans argued that the CEP threshold change in the bill it needed to better target resources to those students most in need. However, this belief is misguided. Committee Democrats recognize that the program, as designed, *already* targets vulnerable students and schools most in need. CEP has become a vital part of the nutrition safety net in the fight to reduce food insecurity and improve access to healthy meals. The change proposed in the legislation would severely damage the progress made in reducing stigma, paperwork burden, and other obstacles to school meal access. Children’s HealthWatch asserts that raising the threshold for the Community Eligibility Provision would likely increase—rather than decrease—the risk of food insecurity among these students and their families.¹² The nonpartisan Congressional

⁹ Food Research Action Council & Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. *Community Eligibility Adoption Rises for the 2015–2016 School Year, Increasing Access to School Meals*, (May 13, 2016) available at: <http://frac.org/pdf/take-up-of-cep-report.pdf>

¹⁰ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. *House Bill Restricting Free School Meals Option Could Increase Food Insecurity in High-poverty Neighborhoods*, (May 20, 2016) available at: <http://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/house-bill-restricting-free-school-meals-option-could-increase-food>

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Children’s HealthWatch. *Treatment Plan for Hunger*, (September 2016) available at: <http://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Treatment-Plan-for-Hunger-for-web.pdf>

Budget Office confirmed that the CEP change in the bill would threaten participation in the school meals program for many students currently receiving free school meals.¹³

Committee Democrats offered a series of amendments that sought to preserve access to healthy meals for low-income families and school districts through CEP. Subcommittee Ranking Member Fudge offered an amendment to strike the CEP threshold change and offered an amendment to prohibit the implementation of the legislation should it make it more difficult for schools to provide free meals. Ranking Member Scott offered an amendment that called for a study on the efficacy of providing universal free meals to all students nationwide.

Unfortunately, each of these amendments offered to protect current access to school meals programs through CEP was defeated.

Outreach Restrictions and Increased Verification

Committee Democrats strongly believe that the integrity of federal child nutrition programs is critically important and must be protected. The Republican proposal to increase the verification requirements in school meal programs as a response to reports of error rates in the program however is misguided. In addition to restricting community eligibility, the bill dramatically increases verification requirements for school meal applications in ways that could cause eligible students to lose access to the free or reduced-price school meals to which they are eligible. Under the proposal, many school districts would be required to verify significantly more applications, creating burdens for schools and families. The most troublesome element of the increased verification requirement is that, coupled with the loss of community eligibility, the two provisions would work in concert to impact a disproportionate number of the most vulnerable families, such as those who are homeless, migrant, immigrant or have limited English proficiency. Children in these families are the most likely to fall through the cracks and lose access to these school meals even though they are eligible. To mitigate the harm caused by this proposal, Mr. Polis offered an amendment to protect free and reduced-price eligibility in households where the language accessibility requirement was not met. That amendment was not adopted. Further, Mr. Takano offered an amendment to maintain the current verification procedures, which was also defeated.

H.R. 5003 also interferes with school districts' ability to conduct effective outreach to enroll families eligible for free and reduced-price meals. The bill prohibits school districts from including the eligibility requirements for school meals on the school meal applications and places an arbitrary cap on the number of times that schools can ask families to fill out applications. This proposal would reduce the number of eligible children applying for school meals and particularly impact the many working poor families who become eligible during the school year due to fluctuations in income. Ms. Davis offered an amendment to remove the senseless cap on outreach that school districts can conduct. That amendment was not adopted.

H.R. 5003 ERODES THE FEDERAL ROLE IN ENSURING ACCESS TO HEALTHY, NUTRITIOUS MEALS

H.R. 5003 takes direct aim at the federal role in child nutrition programs by weakening federal nutrition standards, limiting Secretarial authority to administer the programs, and

¹³ Congressional Budget Office. *Cost Estimate H.R. 5003: Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016*, (June 30, 2016) available at: <https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/114th-congress-2015-2016/costestimate/hr5003.pdf>

introducing a three-state pilot block grant program that is devoid of any meaningful federal oversight.

Section 115 of the legislation would prohibit the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture from issuing or establishing, “any regulations or requirements not explicitly authorized” by the Act. This policy would not only challenge the authorities granted to the Executive Branch under Article II of the Constitution but also prevent a necessary response by the federal government, even in an emergency situation. For example, should food contamination or a public health crisis in a school or schools occur, the Secretary could not issue guidance to assist states and school districts in their response to such crisis. Ranking Member Scott offered an amendment to strike this limitation on the Secretary’s authority. This amendment was supported unanimously by Committee Democrats, but was still defeated.

The three-state block grant proposal in the bill represents an even more egregious challenge to the federal role in school meals programs. This proposal coincides with the broader Republican effort to give states blank checks of federal taxpayer money under the guise of flexibility. The block grant would allow three states nearly unfettered access to federal money for the purpose of implementing child nutrition programs. Under this pilot program, states would only be required to provide an “assurance” that they provide access to at least one affordable and healthy meal paid for out of one general fund provided to the state, rather than reimbursed on a per meal basis. The terms “healthy” and “affordable” are not defined, so there are virtually no guarantees that children would actually receive affordable and healthy meals.

Block grants are capped funding streams that cannot respond to either increases or decreases in demand. Therefore, during a recession the block grant would be unable to absorb the increased demand and serve more needy children. The current structure ensures that every eligible child gets a meal reimbursed in full or in part by the USDA. Further, block grants tend to dramatically lose value over time because they are not adjusted for inflation. As a result, the vast majority of major block grant programs have actually shrunk in inflation-adjusted terms since their inception. For example, inflation-adjusted funding for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program has decreased 32 percent and the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant has decreased 29 percent.¹⁴ Therefore, it is deeply concerning that capping the school meals funding could result in fewer children having access to school meals through the loss of funding alone. Coupled with the fact that the pilot program would only require a loose assurance that children are actually fed healthy meals, the block grant pilot erodes the very intention of school-based feeding programs.

The inclusion of the three state block grant pilot in the bill serves as the first step in moving to block grant school meal programs across all fifty states, as evidenced by a Republican amendment offered to do just that, earning the support of nearly half of Committee Republicans. The intent of the block grant pilot is clear – to limit the number of children served by federal nutrition programs and limit the federal investment in these programs. Committee Democrats are steadfast in unanimous rejection of any efforts to turn child nutrition programs into a block grant. The amendment offered by Ranking Member Scott to strike the block grant pilot was rejected on a party line vote.

¹⁴ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. *Funding for Housing, Health, and Social Services Block Grants Has Fallen Markedly Over Time*, (March 24, 2016) available at: <http://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/funding-for-housing-health-and-social-services-block-grants-has-fallen>

H.R. 5003 FAILS TO ADEQUATELY IMPROVE FOODS SERVED OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL MEALS

The summer months bring with them reduced access to school meal programs provided during the school year for millions of children; they are periods of increased risk for food insecurity and consumption of excessive unhealthy foods. Millions of children lose access to school breakfast, lunch, and afterschool meals that are available during the regular school year. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) fills this gap by providing free and nutritious meals and snacks to low-income children when school is not in session.

H.R. 5003 made various changes to SFSP. The legislation included certain provisions to streamline provider eligibility, a concept widely supported by both Democrats and Republicans. However, the legislation failed to make investments necessary for successful implementation of this provision. In order to build on the underlying provisions in H.R. 5003, Democrats offered amendments to expand the range of the SFSP allowing more low-income children to be served. Specifically, Ms. Adams offered an amendment to modernize the area eligibility test to allow community-based organizations to participate if 40 percent of the children in the area are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Currently, the 50 percent area qualification is inconsistent with other federally funded programs that support services for low-income children and require 40 percent, such as the 21st Century Community Learning Center program and Title I-A of the ESEA, which require at least 40 percent. The amendment offered by Ms. Adams to use a 40 percent standard was not adopted.

The Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (Summer EBT) program is also an important tool in combatting summer hunger and enjoys widespread bipartisan support. The Summer EBT program began as a demonstration program and studies have shown success in reducing the most severe forms of food insecurity and enabling participating families to procure and eat more fruits, vegetables, dairy, and whole grains.¹⁵ In fact, a Summer EBT benefit of \$60 per month per child has been shown to reduce the most severe category of food insecurity among children during the summer by one third.¹⁶ In April, the program received nearly \$27 million in grants to expand these benefits to new rural areas, Tribal Nations, and areas of extreme need, including Flint, Michigan. While H.R. 5003 continues the authorization of this important program, the annual investment in the Summer EBT program is reduced by over fifty percent from the FY 2016 appropriated amount, therefore limiting the reach and the success of the Summer EBT program. An amendment, introduced by Ms. Davis and co-sponsored by Ms. Bonamici, sought to go beyond maintenance of current funding levels and increase funding to expand the program nationwide. Despite the successes of the program, the amendment was voted down along partisan lines.

Outside of SFSP, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) also provides healthy foods outside the school day by providing nutritious meals and snacks to children in day care or afterschool. But many sites participating in either the SFSP or the CACFP program also provide full-day educational and enrichment activities. These programs provide a dual benefit, providing both healthy foods and educational support to children when not in school. For example, summer education programs are valuable in addressing the academic slide that can occur over the summer. As effective as these programs can be, most are unable to provide a

¹⁵ USDA. *Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (SEBTC) Demonstration: Summary Report*, (May 2016) available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/ops/sebtfinalreport.pdf>

¹⁶ *Id.*

third meal to all-day participants, despite the need for this additional meal among many in the communities these sites serve.

Recognizing the essential role of SFSP and CACFP sites that provide all-day enrichment activities to participants, Committee Democrats sought to expand these providers' ability to nourish those participants throughout the day. Amendments proposed by Ranking Member Scott and Ms. Bonamici would allow the provision of a third meal in the Summer Food Service Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program, respectively. These amendments, despite their merits, unanimous Democratic support, and even bipartisan support for similar legislation introduced in this Congress, failed to gain more than a handful of Committee Republican votes.

H.R. 5003 IGNORES THE PUBLIC HEALTH NEEDS OF THE NATION'S CHILDREN

No amount of lead is a safe amount of lead. Yet children in Flint, Michigan were exposed to astronomical levels of lead in their drinking water. The seepage of lead into the drinking water in Flint generated a public health crisis and prompted President Obama to declare a federal state of emergency. The research is clear on the impact of exposure to lead on young children. The adverse effects of lead exposure range from decreased academic attainment, damage to the brain and nervous system, slowed growth and development, learning and behavior problems, such as juvenile delinquency and criminal behavior, and hearing and speech problems.¹⁷ These effects can result in a significant decline in earnings for those impacted, loss of tax revenues, additional burdens to the criminal justice system and special education system, and increased stress on the health care system.

The tragedy in Flint resulted from irresponsible local and state decisions made in an effort to cut costs, sacrificing the health of a community in the process. The poisoning of Flint residents, especially all of its 29,000 children, should serve as catalyst for legislators to take action to both respond to the families and children affected in Flint, and to also take steps to prevent other children from lead exposure. Unfortunately, Flint is not the only community suffering from lead contamination in its water; other communities across the country are also facing extremely elevated lead levels in drinking water.

Federal nutrition programs are a powerful tool in responding to the crisis in Flint, since the programs provide the healthy foods with the vitamins and nutrients necessary to help mitigate the effects of lead poisoning, such as vitamin C, iron, and calcium.¹⁸ In its federal response to Flint, the USDA provided: summertime nutrition assistance through the Summer EBT program to the more than 39,000 children who live or attend schools in the area affected by lead-contaminated water, an additional \$62,700 for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to help schools purchase fruit and vegetable snacks, and leveraged the WIC program to provide blood lead testing at clinics for WIC participants and allowed WIC benefits to include ready-to-feed infant formula.¹⁹ The approximately 7,600 Flint residents participating in the WIC program

¹⁷ Centers for Disease Control. *Childhood Lead Poisoning Data, Statistics, and Surveillance*, (September 1, 2016) available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/data/index.htm>

¹⁸ Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. *How to Fight Lead Exposure with Nutrition*, (February 12, 2016) available at: <http://www.eatright.org/resource/health/wellness/preventing-illness/how-to-fight-lead-exposure-with-nutrition>

¹⁹ USDA. *Fact Sheet: USDA Assistance to Residents Affected by the Water Emergency in Flint, Michigan*, (August 16, 2016) available at: <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=2016/02/0038.xml>

(including around 1,500 women, 1,800 infants, and 4,300 children) were also offered supportive services as well as nutrition education on mitigating lead absorption through dietary changes.²⁰

Committee Democrats recognize the importance of federal nutrition programs in responding to a crisis, such as the one residents of Flint experienced, as well as responding to the everyday needs of our nation's mothers and children. Therefore, in the wake of Flint, it is even more important that Congress does not cut corners in federal nutrition programs. These programs are relied upon every day, but even more so when a situation like the water contamination in Flint emerges.

To prevent similar disasters, Democrats believe that any reauthorization must address the immediate risk to mental and physical health from contaminated water by ensuring that all schools and CACFP providers have potable drinking water, as required by current law. To that end, Democrats offered two amendments related to water testing and safety. An amendment offered by Ranking Member Scott provided funding for nationwide water testing in schools and child care settings. Committee Democrats recognize that addressing the prevalence of lead in drinking water will require an upfront investment, but firmly believe that this investment is both cost-effective and a moral imperative. Research has shown that for every dollar spent on controlling lead hazards, \$17 to \$221 would be returned on that investment through health benefits, increased IQ, higher lifetime earnings, tax revenue, reduced spending on special education, and reduced criminal activity.²¹ Mr. DeSaulnier also offered a water safety amendment requiring the USDA to set up a process to ensure state compliance with potable water requirements. This no-cost, commonsense amendment would have been the first step in ensuring kids across the country are not exposed to unsafe drinking water. Unfortunately, these amendments failed to garner the support of Committee Republicans and neither of these amendments was adopted by the Committee.

STAKEHOLDERS AND ADVOCACY GROUPS OPPOSE H.R. 5003

A broad coalition of hundreds of nutrition, medical, hunger, child welfare, education, and religious organizations joined in opposition to H.R. 5003. The organizations opposed to H.R. 5003 include, but are not limited to: *9to5, National Association of Working Women, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Action for Healthy Kids, Afterschool Alliance, Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American College of Preventive Medicine, American Diabetes Association, American Public Health Association, Bread for the World, Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Center for Science in the Public Interest, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund, Children's HealthWatch, Children's Law Center, Coalition on Human Needs, Consumer Federation of America, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, First Focus Campaign for Children, Food Policy Action, Hunger Free America, Islamic Relief USA, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, Migrant Legal Action Program, MomsRising, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good, National Association of School Nurses, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of Social Workers, National Black Nurses Association, National Council of La Raza (NCLR), National Farm to School Network, National Farmers, National Immigration Law Center, National Urban League, National WIC Association, National Women's*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ E. Gould. *Childhood Lead Poisoning: Conservative Estimates of the Social and Economic Benefits of Lead Hazard Control*, (March 31, 2009) available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2717145/>

Law Center, NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), RESULTS, School Social Work Association of America, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), The Jewish Federations of North America, The National CACFP Forum, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Salvation Army, Trust for America's Health, Union of Concerned Scientists, United Fresh Produce Association, Witnesses to Hunger Philadelphia, National Education Association (NEA), National PTA, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Diabetes Association, Common Sense Kids Action, Feeding America, The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), and Food Research & Action Center (FRAC).

ROLL CALL VOTE TO REPORT H.R. 5003

H.R. 5003 was reported by a vote of 20 yeas and 14 nays. No Democratic Committee Members voted in favor of the bill.

CONCLUSION

Regrettably, H.R. 5003 represents a missed opportunity to make continued improvements in the health and wellbeing of our country. H.R. 5003 threatens the long-established federal role in school meals programs, weakens nutrition standards, and makes it more difficult for schools to provide students with access to free, healthy meals. These policies put at risk the progress made by the last reauthorization in improving both the nutritional quality of, and access to meals served, in federal nutrition programs for millions of students and their families.

Rather than proposing policies that would introduce unhealthy foods in schools, burdensome paperwork requirements, and troubling limits on federal oversight, the Education and the Workforce Committee should bolster and expand programs and policies supported by stakeholders and advocacy groups that provide needed support for the populations they serve. We, as a nation, have the resources to ensure all children, especially those in need, are able to access regular and healthy meals. But we, as a Committee, must find the will to come together to achieve that goal.

Despite opposition to the majority of amendments offered by Democrats during mark-up, Committee Democrats will continue to push for a comprehensive reauthorization that makes it easier for schools to provide meals without unnecessary burden or stigma, strengthens the nutrition safety net both inside and outside of schools, and puts first the future health of our country.

For these reasons, among others, Committee Democrats stand in strong opposition to H.R. 5003, and respectfully ask the full House of Representatives to oppose this bill.



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Ranking Member



RUBÉN HINOJOSA



SUSAN A. DAVIS



RAÚL M. GRIJALVA



JOE COURTNEY



MARCIA L. FUDGE



JARED POLIS



GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLÁN



FREDERICA S. WILSON



SUZANNE BONAMICI



MARK POCAN



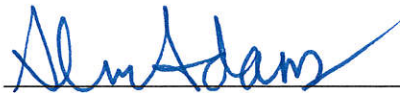
MARK TAKANO



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MARK DeSAULNIER