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Access to Healthy Food for Young Children Act

Reduce the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) area eligibility test from 50 percent to 40 percent to streamline access to healthy meals for young children in child care. Currently, family child care homes only qualify for area eligibility in areas with 50 percent or more low-income children (as defined by local census data or the percentage of children in the local school eligible for free and reduced price meals). The threshold is too high to appropriately target many communities with struggling families. Reducing the area eligibility test to a 40 percent threshold would make many more child care providers who serve low-income children eligible for the higher Tier I reimbursement, and many more children in need would receive healthy CACFP meals and snacks.

Allow child care centers and homes the option of serving a third meal service (typically this would be a snack or supper) for children who are in care for 8 or more hours. Many children are in care for more than eight hours per day as their parents work long hours to make ends meet, so they rely on child care providers to meet a majority of their nutrition needs.

Increase CACFP reimbursements for child care centers and family child care providers by 10 cents per child per meal per tier to stem participation declines and improve nutrition.

Research has shown that increasing reimbursements directly improves the nutritional value of foods served in family child care, while lowering reimbursements decreases the availability of fruits and vegetables and increases the percent of energy from total fat and saturated fat. Higher reimbursements will assure that more children participate in CACFP, both attracting more child care centers and helping to stem the loss of family child care providers.

Increase the Administrative Reimbursement Rate for CACFP sponsoring organizations by \$5 per family child care home per month and protect rates from negative cost-of-living adjustments to sustain the participation of family childcare providers. CACFP sponsors are the non-profit community-based organizations supporting the participation of family child care homes in CACFP. Sponsor's administrative costs include additional ongoing training and oversight, monitoring visits, and extra time spent to help low-income providers overcome literacy and language issues. Many sponsors have been unable to make ends meet due to high program costs and the loss of economies of scale as providers dropped out of the program, leading to a 28% decrease in the number of sponsors in the last dozen years.

Provide two year implementation funds (\$100 million) for State CACFP agencies, as well as \$20 million for USDA, to successfully implement CACFP and sustain CACFP participation. These funds would be allocated to State CACFP agencies to support the successful implementation

of the new healthier meal pattern and increase CACFP participation, as well as supporting USDA's important role in providing materials, training and support to State agencies and program operators.

Continue funding for the ongoing five year cycle of child care and CACFP nutrition and wellness quality in child care settings study, authorized in the *Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act*.

Authorize the continuation of the Congressionally-mandated USDA CACFP paperwork reduction initiative including a focus on maximizing the effective use of technology. USDA would continue to reduce unnecessary or duplicative paperwork resulting from regulations and recordkeeping requirements for State agencies, institutions, family and group day care homes, and sponsored centers participating in the program.

Provide a carry-over option for organizations sponsoring child care centers and afterschool programs in CACFP. This provision would permit certain sponsoring organizations to carry-over a maximum of 10 percent of administrative funds into the following fiscal year, which will allow sponsors to maximize the federal reimbursements effectively from one fiscal year to the next. Sponsors of family child care homes currently have a carry-over option but sponsors of child care centers and afterschool programs do not. This has created difficulties for some sponsors in utilizing their administrative funding effectively to provide these centers and programs with training covering CACFP rules and requirements, nutrition and menu planning; assistance with monthly paperwork; and heightened scrutiny and oversight of their compliance with food program regulations through three to six on-site monitoring visits each year, as well as monthly review and audit of food service records including menus.

Cut red tape for child care centers serving low-income families by creating a "Provision 2" streamlining option for CACFP. "Provision 2" would allow child care centers that predominantly serve low-income children to offer free meals to all children for a 4-year period, without obtaining additional applications (like the same option in the school meal programs). In CACFP, "Provision 2" child care centers would use the existing blended rate formula to establish reimbursement claiming percentages in the first year. Creating a "Provision 2" option for CACFP is a low-cost way to simplify center meal counting and claiming procedures, and reduce application burdens for parents.