

Casey Introduces Bill to Provide Healthier Meals to More Children, Support Child Care Providers

MARCH 20, 2024

New bill would increase number of daily meals for which child care providers can receive funding from two to three.

Casey has [long worked](#) to [help kids](#) access [healthy meals](#)

Washington, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) introduced the to help provide more nutritious meals to more children. The legislation would increase the number of meals child care providers can be reimbursed for by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) from two meals and one snack to three meals and one snack and adjust the reimbursement rate calculation for child care homes to better keep pace with inflation.

“An additional meal can make all the difference to a child in need and a family under financial stress,” said Senator Casey. **“This bill allows for long-overdue improvements to a critical childhood nutrition program that will ease the burden on child care providers and ensure children have a chance at a healthy start.”**

CACFP provides nearly 4.7 million children in child care centers, day care homes, and Head Start, including more than 115,000 Pennsylvania children, with nutritious meals to prepare them for a healthy start in life. However, insufficient reimbursement rates and outdated policies have created barriers for care providers participating in the program and families who rely on the program. Allowing for the provision of an additional meal to children spending more than eight hours in a care setting will ensure no child goes hungry and will help alleviate pressures on family budgets. Streamlining eligibility and paperwork will help bring CACFP participation is in reach for more child care providers giving more working families access to child care that serves nutritious meals.

Senator Casey has long fought for access to healthy, nutritious meals for children. In the government funding legislation passed earlier this month, Senator Casey [secured](#) \$7.03 billion in funding for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), helping nearly 7 million women, infants, and children access the healthy food they need.

In 2023, Casey [led](#) the *Child Care Nutrition Enhancement Act* to help more child care centers overcome financial burdens to participate in CACFP. He and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) [introduced](#) the *Wise Investment in our Children (WIC) Act* to expand eligibility for children to participate in the WIC program. Additionally, in 2021, Senator Casey [introduced](#) the *Access to Healthy Foods for Young Children Act* to provide needed nutrition assistance to many families who struggled because of the COVID-19 pandemic and to improve CAFCP's effectiveness.

The Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act would:

- **Allow for an Additional Meal Service:** Child care centers would have the option of serving a fourth meal service for children who are in care for eight or more hours.
- **Update Reimbursement Rate Adjustments:** CACFP reimbursement rates for child care homes would be aligned to the consumer price index for food away from home to better reflect increasing costs and create parity within the program.
- **Review Serious Deficiency Process:** The USDA would be required to review the serious deficiency process, a process that identifies care providers out of compliance with program rules.
- **Adjust Eligibility Criteria:** Private child care centers would no longer have to certify for CACFP on a monthly basis and would be allowed to certify annually.
- **Authorize the Establishment of an Advisory Committee on Paperwork Reduction:** This would ensure the continuation of the congressionally mandated USDA CACFP paperwork reduction initiative including a focus on maximizing the effective use of technology.

In addition to Senator Casey, this bill is cosponsored by Senators John Fetterman (D-PA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Jack Reed (D-RI).

The bill is endorsed by more than 30 organizations including American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), Home Grown, National CACFP Sponsors Association, and ZERO TO THREE.

Read more about the *Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act* [here](#).

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