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Response to House Education and Workforce Committee Republicans' CNR proposal

On Wednesday, the House Education and Workforce Committee Republicans responded [<http://edworkforce.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=400658>] to withering criticism of its child nutrition proposal. As has been chronicled by nutrition, hunger, medical, national security, education and community organizations across the country, the bill is harmful to children's health, heaps administrative costs on schools, and plans to bury parents in more bureaucratic red tape, all while subsidizing well-off children at the expense of our less fortunate kids who need help. Let's break it down:

First, the House Republicans' proposal will raise the threshold on the Community Eligibility Provision, or CEP, causing school meal participation to fall dramatically and causing schools to have a harder time balancing their cafeteria budgets. The Congressional Budget Office projects the House bill would cut \$1.6 billion over 10 years from the school meals program. How? Kicking children out of the program is the only way to achieve this magnitude of savings.

Second, raising the threshold also undercuts the cost share model of CEP, where schools pick up costs for the very small percentage of their students who would not otherwise qualify for free or reduced meals. As schools are forced out of CEP by the House proposal, they lose economies of scale. That's because, in reality, CEP leads to higher participation, and higher participation saves schools money as they can produce meals at a lower cost per meal. CEP has been shown to increase school breakfast participation by an average of 9 percent, with some school districts seeing participation increase by as much as 37 percent. Many schools may stop offering breakfast altogether without CEP.

Third, by eliminating the paid meal equity provision, the House Republicans' bill does exactly what it falsely accuses CEP of doing--it puts taxpayers on the hook for subsidizing meals for children from well-off families at the expense of children from lesser means.

Fourth, by raising the CEP threshold to 60 percent from the current 40 percent, the House Republicans' bill will raise administrative costs and burdens on schools and bury parents in unnecessary paperwork.

The Senate's bipartisan bill to reauthorize child nutrition programs offers a viable, positive step forward. The Senate's bill is a win for children, parents, schools and for our country's future. It maintains our commitment to science-based nutrition standards for school meals and protects the advancements we have made in children's health since the passage of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. Rather than diminish the progress made since the changes were implemented in 2012, the Senate's bill ensures progress will continue improving our children's diets, and it promises to end partisan battles about the future of our kids.

- Since passage of the bipartisan Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act in 2010, America's children have benefitted in the following ways:
- Data show that obesity rates are falling among young kids;
- Over 98 percent of schools have embraced updated, healthier meal standards;
- Kids are now eating at least 13 percent more of their entrees, at least 16 percent more vegetables and 23 percent more fruit at lunch;
- More low-income children are benefiting from breakfast and lunch programs;
- Nearly 4 million children have access to healthy food in the summer when school is out and meals are scarce; and
- 8 million low-income women, infants and young children now receive an improved variety of healthy food through WIC.

Now is not the time to go backward or compromise the future of our children.

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