

# The Hunger Free Summer for Kids Act of 2015

Introduced by Senators John Boozman (R-AR), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Mark Kirk (R-IL), and Joe Donnelly (D-IN).

## The Problem: Summer Hunger

Child hunger impacts one in every five children in America. While the school lunch program provides healthy meals for nearly 22 million low-income children, in the summertime, the vast majority of those children no longer have access to the meals they need. Food insecurity increases in the summer as families struggle to make up for lost school meals, putting millions of children at risk of health, developmental and learning challenges.

## The Summer Meal Gap: 5 out of 6 Low-Income Children Not Reached

The federal Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) attempts to fill the summer meal gap by providing funding for providers to serve food in a congregate (group) setting to low-income children during summer breaks. The program works well and should be strengthened in communities that are able to establish congregate feeding sites and where children are able to access them. However, while some areas of the country have had great success, currently only 18 percent of children, or one out of six, who receive free or reduced-price lunch at school receive food assistance through a summer feeding program. That's more than 17 million children who lose access to a consistent, healthy, reliable source of food.



One-third of all low-income children across the country (nearly 9 million children) live in communities that are ineligible to operate an open summer meals site. Even where there are summer meal sites, many children have trouble accessing them. Some children are too young to walk to sites or unable to travel across highways or through high crime areas while their parents are at work. In rural areas, where there are roughly one million low-income children, the closest site could be dozens of miles away from a child's home and the cost of fuel can be prohibitive. Extreme summer weather can close sites, many of which operate outdoors. No child should be excluded from receiving the meals they need in the summer as a result of their zip code or a summer thunderstorm.

## The Solution: The Hunger Free Summer for Kids Act

The Hunger Free Summer for Kids Act of 2015 (S. 1966) enables a comprehensive solution to summer child hunger for children in communities most underserved by the program. The legislation gives these communities additional proven, effective program models to better reach eligible children. This includes the option to implement summer electronic benefit transfer (EBT) or non-congregate feeding programs. With these improvements, as many as 6.5 million children who are underserved by the program currently could get the food they need during the summer months. These policies complement the site-based model and efforts to strengthen it, and would improve summer nutrition for low-income children no matter where they live.

**6.5 million**  
low-income children could  
access food they need  
during summer.

This legislation is modeled on the successful demonstration projects USDA administered to test both program options. The extensive evaluations showed strong results, including significantly improved access to summer meals, decreased hunger, and improved consumption of healthy foods.

## **Provisions of the Hunger Free Summer for Kids Act of 2015**

This legislation maintains strong national standards and accountability while providing two new program options that communities can use to effectively close the summer gap. States will be allowed to choose to implement either option in some or all eligible areas of the state and must include details in their state administrative plan submitted annually for approval by USDA.

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### **Summer EBT Program Option**

The summer EBT program would provide households with children qualified to receive free or reduced-price school meals with an EBT card during the summer months. The summer EBT card, based on the WIC EBT model, would include \$30 per month (up to \$100 total) per eligible child that the family can use to purchase specified nutritious food to replace the meals children would otherwise receive at school.

*This option would be available:*

- In communities not eligible to operate open summer meals sites
- In rural communities



### ***Proven Results!***

*The USDA tested and evaluated summer EBT program provided parents an effective and efficient way to access food for their child. The model **reduced child hunger by more than 30 percent.** Children consumed healthier foods, including more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and dairy products, and fewer sugar-sweetened beverages.*

### **Off-Site Consumption Option**

States would have the option to provide meals to be consumed off-site to eligible children, including through mobile feeding programs, backpack meal programs and other meal delivery options like those tested by USDA and through private funds across the country.

*This option would be available:*

- In communities not eligible to operate open summer meals sites
- In rural communities
- In cases of extreme weather or public safety concerns
- When a site only provides one meal a day
- When a site is only open four or fewer days a week.

*The USDA tested and evaluated non-congregate programs increased access to summer meals for children in rural and hard-to-reach communities. Community providers reported a **reduction in transportation and operational barriers** and meals were provided to **thousands of children** in areas who otherwise would not have been reached by the summer meals program.*

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**Help end summer child hunger!  
Ask your Senator to co-sponsor  
the S. 1966 Hunger Free Summer for Kids Act of 2015**