



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Letter to U.S. Senators Chuck Schumer & Kirsten Gillibrand: Budget Reconciliation is a Once in a Generation Opportunity to Invest in New York's Kids

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL October 5, 2021

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Hon. Chuck Schumer

United States Senate Majority Leader United States Senate 322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Kirsten Gillibrand

478 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Budget Reconciliation is a Once in a Generation Opportunity to Invest in New York's Kids
Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Senator Gillibrand:

As members of the New York State Legislature, we urge you to include critical anti-hunger and anti poverty provisions as part of the Build Back Better Plan. These provisions would help lift millions of children in New York out of poverty and improve their nutrition security while advancing our state and nation's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, more than 12 million children nationwide are living in poverty, and 13 million may face hunger this year. Black and Latino households with children are much more likely to experience poverty and food hardship than white households with children. In New York, 20% of children across the state could face hunger in 2021 – an increase over previous years. While COVID-19 relief measures, such as the implementation of Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), increased SNAP benefits and the expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC), have reduced food insecurity from its peak, the rate remains shamefully high. Moreover, nutrition insecurity and child poverty are long-standing problems that require long-term solutions.

Food hardship is especially pronounced during the summer months when children lose access to school meals, and challenges like transportation, weather and bureaucracy make accessing summer meals sites challenging. In the summer of 2019, six out of seven children who received free or reduced-price meals at school were unable to access summer meals. With the demonstrated benefits of programs like Summer EBT, we can close the summer meal gap.

We have seen that the pandemic has left so many kids behind. The data demonstrates that children who live in poverty and in food-insecure households are more likely than their food-secure peers to have poor educational, health, and economic outcomes. We strongly encourage the inclusion of the following provisions as part of the budget reconciliation bill to help end child hunger and poverty in New York and across the country:

Nationwide Expansion of the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (SEBTC). SEBTC provides a grocery benefit to eligible children over the summer to help them access nutrition when school is not in session. The traditional summer meals program only reaches about 1 in 7 eligible children because they are not able to overcome barriers like transportation or severe weather, or they do not have a summer meals site in their community. SEBTC ensures that children whose families are struggling financially have consistent access to nutrition during the summer months. SEBTC is a

lifeline, especially for kids who live in rural communities without convenient access to summer meals sites. Making New York eligible to participate in this program would be a huge support for as many as 2.5 million children across the state.

Extension of the improvements to the Child Tax Credit (CTC). Researchers at Columbia University estimate that the expanded CTC, temporarily authorized in the American Rescue Plan, has already lifted 3 million children out of poverty. Food insufficiency in households with children decreased by 3 percentage points after families received the first CTC payment in July. If made permanent, the enhanced child tax credit would benefit more than 3.5 million kids in New York, including more than 1.5 million children previously denied the full benefit because their family incomes were too low to qualify. In addition, if made permanent, this program alone would lift 250,000 kids in New York out of poverty. We must continue to build on the early successes by extending the enhanced, fully refundable CTC.

Expansion of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). CEP enables schools to serve meals at no charge to all students without requiring them to apply for free or reduced-price meals by leveraging direct certification data from other means-tested programs. CEP has many well-documented benefits, including better access to school breakfast and lunch, especially for students near the cut-off for free or reduced-price meals, improved nutrition, increased school attendance and improved academic performance. While many school districts across the State of New York participate in CEP, preliminary analysis indicates 270 new schools serving more than 120,000 kids in the state would likely adopt CEP if changes were made to the reimbursement.

As you consider the Build Back Better Plan, we urge you to address the urgent needs of New York's children by expanding Summer EBT to close the summer meals gap, removing administrative burdens to bring the benefits of CEP kids who most need meals and making permanent the improvements to the CTC. Through these proven investments, you can ensure that children in New York have the nutrition they need to learn, grow and thrive.

