

April 22, 2016

The Honorable
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

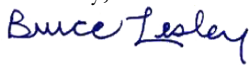
On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children (FFCC), a bipartisan advocacy organization committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, I am writing to voice our strong opposition to the Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016. Healthy nutrition is an essential building block of a healthy childhood, so First Focus Campaign for Children advocates based on the idea that no child in our nation should go hungry, and every child should have access to healthy and nutritious food.

With 20 percent of American children living in poverty and over 15 million children living in food insecure households, child nutrition programs play an essential role in providing healthy meals to kids both in and out of school. Hungry children face serious obstacles to healthy development and success in school, but fortunately programs like the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program can improve nutrition and fight food insecurity year round.

Unfortunately, the Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016, which reauthorizes each of the aforementioned programs, not only puts access to these essential food services at-risk, but weakens nutrition standards that help children thrive academically and developmentally. Specifically, the provisions to increase both verification requirements and community eligibility thresholds will undoubtedly result in children losing free and reduced price meals during the school day. In addition, the bill threatens the progress schools across the country have made in providing healthier meals to students by exempting fundraisers, family meal days, and a la carte items from the nutrition standards and excluding scientists and public health officials from further reviews of the standards.

This approach to a child nutrition reauthorization is not in the best interest of America's children. We must continue to improve access to healthy foods for all kids, regardless of income, rather than make successful programs less nutritious and more complicated for families.

We welcome the opportunity to continue working with you on this reauthorization and other proposals to improve the well-being of America's children.

Sincerely,

President