



EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

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January 7, 2010

Dear Senator,

As Congress prepares for the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act, I urge you to support improvements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) by cosponsoring the Access to Nutritious Meals for Young Children Act (S. 2749), introduced by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York. The Early Care and Education Consortium (ECEC), an alliance of the nation's providers of high-quality child care and early learning programs, strongly supports this legislation. ECEC members' 8,300 centers serve more than 800,000 children in 48 states and the District of Columbia, and they all know the value of a nutritious meal for the healthy growth and development of young children. Currently, approximately 2,000 member centers participate in CACFP.

CACFP makes a significant difference in the ability of child care and Head Start programs to offer wholesome and nutritious meals. Healthy meals lead to healthy child development and healthy children. With the growth in child poverty, the high cost of healthy food, the link between children's health and obesity, as well as overall food insecurity among families and communities, CACFP is an essential support. ECEC member centers report, especially in this economy, CACFP is a crucial part of program budgets as well as a much-needed support for families.

CACFP is important not just because it provides food, but because it provides the right foods. In addition, CACFP-sponsoring organizations and state agencies teach child care providers not just the importance of good nutrition but also offer practical advice and guidance on serving healthy and nutritious food.

The Access to Nutritious Meals for Young Children Act proposes an increase the reimbursement rates for meals and snacks to help offset the rising prices of food; adds an additional meal or snack service for children who are in child care longer hours while their parents piece together work opportunities in this difficult economy; provides important supports for family child care provider eligibility to counteract the dramatic decline in family child care home participation in CACFP; and streamlines and simplifies program paperwork and administration.

These changes would greatly strengthen and improve the CACFP program, and would make a huge difference in your state. Please cosponsor S. 2749 and help us strengthen the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Karolak, Ph.D.
Executive Director