

April 14, 2022

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As negotiations continue in both the House and Senate regarding the COVID-19 supplemental funding bill, we, the undersigned organizations committed to the education, health, and well-being of our nation's students, urge you to extend the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) nationwide waiver authority through the 2022-23 school year.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of the pandemic, the child nutrition waivers have been a lifeline for schools, students, and families across the country.<sup>2</sup> As our nation continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that we extend these vital flexibilities through the 2022-23 school year.

At the onset of the pandemic, USDA was granted authority by Congress in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (Public Law 116-17) to issue nationwide child nutrition waivers. These waivers, including the non-congregate meal service waiver and meal pattern flexibility waiver, provided school nutrition programs, local government agencies, and nonprofit organizations with the flexibility necessary to continue feeding operations despite numerous obstacles, such as nationwide school closures, supply chain disruptions, and critical staff shortages. The waivers, which were last extended through the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 117-43), have had a transformational impact not only on the lives of the children served, but also on their families and surrounding communities. As a result of these flexibilities, an additional 10 million students have received access to free school meals every day over the course of the pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

With the waivers set to expire on June 30, 2022, it is critical that Congress act immediately to extend these flexibilities through the 2022-23 school year. Although our nation continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, significant challenges remain that threaten our ability to provide our students with the high-quality meals they need to thrive.<sup>4</sup> Whether it be persistent

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-disaster-assistance/fns-responds-covid-19/child-nutrition-covid-19-waivers>

<sup>2</sup> <https://edlabor.house.gov/media/press-releases/chairman-scott-statement-on-senate-republicans-blocking-extension-for-school-meal-waivers>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/CN\\_Waiver\\_SignOnFeb2022.pdf](https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/CN_Waiver_SignOnFeb2022.pdf)

supply chain disruptions that endanger a program's ability to source ingredients, or widespread labor shortages that limit a program's capacity to prepare and serve meals, additional flexibility is needed to ensure students continue to receive nutritious meals. As recently introduced legislation in both the House and Senate has demonstrated, extending these waivers through the 2022-23 school year enjoys bipartisan support.<sup>5</sup> Now is not the time to abandon our most at-risk students and families.

As you continue to negotiate the COVID-19 supplemental funding bill, we urge you to act swiftly and include an extension of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's nationwide waiver authority through the 2022-23 school year. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to the well-being of all our nation's students.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association  
Afterschool Alliance  
All4Ed  
Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS)  
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
B-12 Team at New America  
Boys & Girls Clubs of America  
Chiefs for Change  
Colorado Food Cluster Inc.  
Communities In Schools  
EDGE Consulting Partners  
Education Reform Now  
FoodCorps  
Girls Inc.  
Horizons National  
Hunger Free America  
ImmSchools  
Japanese American Citizen's League  
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)  
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Indian Education Association (NIEA)  
National PTA  
National Recreation and Parks Association  
National Rural Education Association  
National Summer Learning Association (NSLA)  
National Urban League

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<sup>5</sup> <https://spanberger.house.gov/posts/spanberger-leads-bipartisan-coalition-in-introducing-bill-to-extend-usda-child-nutrition-waiver-authority-protect-reliable-access-to-school-meals>;  
<https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/newsroom/dem/press/release/chairwoman-stabenow-and-senator-murkowski-lead-bill-to-extend-school-and-summer-meal-flexibilities-to-feed-children>

New Leaders  
Organizations Concerned about Rural Education  
Outward Bound USA  
School Nutrition Association  
SchoolHouse Connection  
Swipe Out Hunger  
The Education Trust  
The Education Trust-Midwest  
Urban School Food Alliance  
YMCA of the USA