

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
Committee Room 328A
Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
Committee Room 328A
Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

On behalf of FoodCorps and the undersigned organizations, we thank you for your commitment to children's health and urge you to include the Food and Nutrition Education in Schools Act in the 2021 Child Nutrition Reauthorization. Food and nutrition educators play a critical role in schools by showing kids where their food comes from, how it grows, how to prepare it, and why it's fun to try fruits and vegetables. Food and nutrition educators increase children's acceptance and enjoyment of the nutritious, tasty meals they are offered in schools, setting them up to make healthy choices for life.

The Food and Nutrition Education in Schools Act provides funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to establish a pilot grant program to create food and nutrition education positions in rural, urban, and tribal schools. Food and nutrition educators will teach lessons rooted in research proven to maximize students' consumption—and enjoyment—of healthy meals, including hands-on experiential learning with school gardens, taste tests, and student engagement. Priority will be given to schools in neighborhoods with high rates of childhood diet-related illnesses and schools in which 40 percent or more of students qualify for free or reduced price meals.

When hands-on food and nutrition education is integrated as a part of a school day, it can have significant impacts on students' nutritional, emotional, and educational well-being. An evaluation of FoodCorps programming found that students who get lots of hands-on education through gardening, cooking, and taste testing activities *eat up to three times more fruits and vegetables at school* than those who get less. Engaging children with hands-on lessons can lead

to reducing food waste because students know where their food comes from and have experience tasting it before they see it on the cafeteria serving line. Studies have also shown that garden education not only connects children to an understanding of where their food comes from, but can improve academic, social, and emotional outcomes as well.

Thanks to Congressional leadership, implementation of the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act has introduced students to new menu items, including a variety of fruits and vegetables. Food and nutrition educators help children try, eat, and enjoy the new tastes that are being introduced.

COVID-19 has highlighted the critical importance of nutritional well-being, as communities who face systemic barriers to nutritious food were hit hardest by the pandemic. School meals are a vitally important resource in ensuring that our children thrive. Experiential food and nutrition education activities expose children to foods in engaging ways, reducing their reluctance to try new things and encouraging them to choose healthy options at mealtime.

We urge you to include the Food and Nutrition Education in Schools Act in the next Child Nutrition Reauthorization, and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (*Chicago, IL*)
Advocates for Better Children's Diets (ABCD) (*Washington, DC*)
Afterschool Alliance (*Washington, DC*)
America's Promise Alliance (*Washington, DC*)
American Heart Association (*Dallas, TX*)
American Horticultural Society (*Alexandria, VA*)
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (*Raleigh, NC*)
Boys & Girls Clubs of America (*Washington, DC*)
Captain Planet Foundation (*Atlanta, GA*)
Center for Ecoliteracy (*Berkeley, CA*)
Center for Science in the Public Interest (*Washington, DC*)
Chef Ann Foundation (*Boulder, CO*)
Common Threads (*Brooklyn, NY*)
Ecotrust (*Portland, OR*)
Family Farm Action (*Missouri*)
First Focus Campaign for Children (*Washington, D.C.*)
FoodCorps (*Washington, DC*)

Food Research & Action Center (*Washington, DC*)
Healthy Schools Campaign (*Chicago, IL*)
KidsGardening (*Burlington, VT*)
Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Teachers College, Columbia University (*New York, NY*)
Life Lab (*Santa Cruz, CA*)
LunchAssist (*West Hollywood, CA*)
Mission: Readiness (*Washington, DC*)
National Education Association (*Washington, DC*)
National Farm to School Network (*Washington, DC*)
National REACH Coalition (*New York*)
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (*Washington, DC*)
School Nutrition Association (*Arlington, VA*)
Save the Children (*Washington, DC*)
Slow Food USA (*New York, NY*)
Slow Food USA School Garden Network (*Brooklyn, NY*)
The Common Market (*Philadelphia, PA*)
The Edible Schoolyard Project (*Berkeley, CA*)
Union of Concerned Scientists (*Cambridge, MA*)
Urban School Food Alliance (*Washington, DC*)
Wellness in the Schools (*New York, NY*)
YMCA of the USA (*Washington, DC*)

Regional, State and Local Organizations

ACCESS (*Medford, OR*)
Agri-Cultura Network / La Cosecha CSA (*Albuquerque, NM*)
Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank (*Akron, OH*)
AR Hunger Relief Alliance (*Little Rock, AR*)
Arthur Morgan Institute for Community Solutions/Agraria (*Yellow Springs, OH*)
Berkeley Unified School District (*Berkeley, CA*)
Blue Mountain Vegetable Farm (*Magazine, AR*)
Bridgeton Board of Education (*Bridgeton, NJ*)
Bronx Health REACH/Institute for Family Health (*New York, NY*)
Canal Market District and Enterprise Hub (*Newark, OH*)
Cedarville Public School (*Cedarville, AR*)
Center for Getting Things Started (*HI*)
Central Community House (*Columbus, OH*)
Chaparral Elementary School (*Poway, CA*)

Chicopee Public Schools (*Chicopee, MA*)
Children's Aid (*New York, NY*)
Children's Hunger Alliance (*Columbus, OH*)
City of Bridgeport - Board of Education (*Bridgeport, CT*)
City Year Columbus (*Columbus, OH*)
Community Food Advocates (*New York, NY*)
Comune (*Columbus, OH*)
Connecticut Partnership for Children, Inc. (*Naugatuck, CT*)
Coupeville Farm To School (*Coupeville, WA*)
Dietitian In Your Kitchen (*Columbus, Ohio*)
Dig Down Deep (*San Diego, CA*)
Edible Schoolyard NYC (*Brooklyn, NY*)
End Hunger Connecticut! (*Hartford, CT*)
Experimental Farm Network (*Philadelphia, PA*)
FamilyCook Productions (*New York, NY*)
Farm to Table - New Mexico (*Santa Fe, NM*)
Farmers Assisting Returning Military (F.A.R.M.) (*Dallas, TX*)
Fayetteville Housing Authority (*Fayetteville, AR*)
Full Plates Full Potential (*Portland, ME*)
Garden Farms Foundation (*Las Vegas, NV*)
Girls on the Run Central Ohio (*Columbus, OH*)
Greater Newark Conservancy (*Newark, NJ*)
Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities (*Traverse City, MI*)
Grow Garden Grow (*Dallas, TX*)
Grow Portland (*Portland, OR*)
Grow Some Good (*Kihei, HI*)
Growing and Growth Collective (*Columbus, OH*)
Growing Healthy Waves- Tupelo, MS (*Tupelo, MS*)
Hamakua Institute (*Ninole, HI*)
Harlem Grown (*New York, NY*)
Hawai'i Seed Growers Network (*HI*)
Hawaii Island Food Alliance (*HI*)
Healthy Communities of the Capital Area (*Gardiner, ME*)
Healthy New Albany (*New Albany, OH*)
Human Service Chamber of Franklin County (*Columbus, OH*)
Imua Culinary (*Honokaa, HI*)
ISD #719, Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools (*Prior Lake, MN*)
Jackson County Schools (*Jackson County, GA*)

Johnson Ohana Foundation *(HI)*
Kokua Hawaii Foundation *(HI)*
Local Matters *(Columbus, OH)*
LSS Food Pantries *(Columbus, OH)*
Maine Farm to Institution *(Gardiner, ME)*
Maine Farm to School Network *(Gardiner, ME)*
Maka'alamihī Farm *(HI)*
Mala Kaluulu Cooperative *(Honolulu, HI)*
Mary Hooker Environmental Sciences Magnet School, Hartford Public Schools *(Hartford, CT)*
Massachusetts Food System Collaborative *(MA)*
Mountain Song Community School *(Colorado Springs, CO)*
New Albany Food Pantry *(New Albany, OH)*
New Directions Career Center *(Columbus, OH)*
New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council *(Santa Fe, NM)*
NJ Academy of Science *(Flemington, NJ)*
NJ YMCA State Alliance *(Trenton, NJ)*
NM Healthy Soil Working Group *(Santa Fe, NM)*
Northeast Organic Farming Association NJ *(Princeton, NJ)*
Now You Know New Mexico *(Tijeras, NM)*
NY Common Pantry *(New York, NY)*
Oahu Farm to School Network *(Oahu, HI)*
Oelwein Community School *(Oelwein, IA)*
Ohio Child Care Resource & Referral Assoc. *(Columbus, OH)*
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association *(Columbus, OH)*
Ohio Women's Alliance *(Columbus, OH)*
One Generation, a project of the Tides Center *(Albuquerque, NM)*
One Ocean County *(Toms River, NJ)*
Oregon Farm to School & School Garden Network *(Ashland, OR)*
Pajaro Valley Unified School District *(Watsonville, CA)*
Paterson Public Schools *(Paterson, NJ)*
Pinnacle Prevention *(Chandler, AZ)*
Real Food for Kids *(McLean, VA)*
Row by Row *(Portland, OR)*
Rural Coalition *(Atrisco, NM)*
Rutgers University *(New Brunswick, NJ)*
Sage Garden Project *(Encinitas, CA)*
Salem County Vocational Technical Schools *(Mannington, NJ)*
Santa Fe Indian School *(Santa Fe, NM)*

Sauvie Island Center (*Portland, OR*)
Seeds That Feed Inc. (*Fayetteville, AR*)
Schenectady City School District (*Schenectady, NY*)
Skip Shockley Foundation (*Dallas, TX*)
Slow Food DFW (*Dallas, TX*)
Slow Food Wallawas (*Joseph, OR*)
South Side Family Farms (*Columbus, OH*)
South Valley Preparatory School (*Albuquerque, NM*)
Springdale Public Schools (*Springdale, AR*)
St. Stephen's Community House (*Columbus, OH*)
STEAM URBAN (*Newark, NJ*)
Sunny Glen Garden (*Columbus, OH*)
Sustainable Food Center (*Austin, TX*)
Terrapin Environmental Solutions Inc. (*Port Washington, NY*)
Texas State Alliance YMCAs (*Texas*)
The Community Ecology Institute (*Columbia, MD*)
The Dublin Food Pantry (*Dublin, OH*)
The Environmental Center (*Bend, OR*)
Tory Hill (*Lakeville, CT*)
Urban Agriculture Cooperative (*Newark, NJ*)
Western Arkansas Child Development, Inc. (*Alma, AR*)