



COMMITTEE ON
**EDUCATION
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REPUBLICANS

**COMMITTEE
STATEMENT**

**Opening Statement of Rep. Russ Fulcher (R-ID), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services Hearing:
"Food for Thought: Examining Federal Nutrition Programs for Young Children
and Infants"
July 28, 2021**

(As prepared for delivery)

"Young children and nursing or expecting mothers need adequate nutrition. Well-fed children have numerous advantages. According to research, the better the nutritional value, the more likely both child and mother will have stronger immune systems, safer pregnancies, and longer lives.

"We also know that access to food leads to more productive learning environments. That is why federal nutrition programs date back to the 1940's. There is a national interest in supporting a healthy baseline for future generations. There is also a critical role for private partners, including religious and other non-profit entities, that help provide these services to people. We saw this last year as we dealt with COVID-19.

"Today, the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act authorize both the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

"These programs help provide nutrition services to vulnerable women and children. Through WIC, the federal government provides funding to states for the purpose of assisting low-income women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have children up to the age of five. State agencies work with tens of thousands of authorized retailers so these vulnerable mothers can purchase certain foods such as fruits, vegetables, milk, whole grain cereal, juice, and eggs.

"CACFP, on the other hand, reimburses meals or snacks served in eligible child care centers, day care homes, and adult day care centers. In Fiscal Year 2019, almost 5 million children and adults from low-income households benefited daily from the program.

"Last year, Congress appropriated over \$25 billion in taxpayer dollars for federal child nutrition programs.

"Congress acted quickly at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to help millions of vulnerable people keep access to this nutritional lifeline. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act boosted WIC funding and allowed the USDA to grant flexibility waivers from certain requirements. Pandemic-related emergency actions helped ensure these vulnerable populations maintain access to these nutrition services.

"These programs and more continue to operate because of executive action. While appropriate last year, the facts on the ground are not the same. Operation Warp Speed has done its job, and life is returning to normal for most Americans. It is time for Congress to be wise stewards of taxpayer money by reinstating the statutory and regulatory system.

"With any government program, particularly one that costs tens of billions of dollars a year, we must carefully balance how to administer the program without exposing taxpayers to waste or abuse.

"Republicans support good government solutions to prevent waste and improve recipients' interaction with the child nutrition programs. Government programs too often encumber participants with unnecessary hurdles and archaic processes. Needy families deserve a seamless experience.

"I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses on how best Congress can strike the right balance when we reauthorize the child nutrition programs.

"My instinct tells me that industry partners can help Congress deliver on the promise of WIC and CACFP. The federal government is out-of-touch with how to help families access the nutrition programs available to them. Congress must work with these entities to help disadvantaged Americans to get the nutrition they need to thrive.

"Any reauthorization of the child nutrition programs must leverage the knowledge and experience of local partners because they know what works best for the vulnerable people we hope to serve."

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