

#STOPTHEBLOCK
save school meals



**National Call to Action – Oppose House Efforts to
Block Grant & Weaken the Child Nutrition Programs**

Objectives of Today's Webinar



- What is going on in Congress and how did we get here?
- What are block grants and why are they **harmful for children?**
- How does the block grant in the House child nutrition bill harm school meal programs and the children they serve?
- What can I do to help protect school meals for children?
- Why else does this matter?

Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR)-

How did we get to this point?

- **Spring/Summer 2015- House Education Committee and Senate Agriculture Committee held hearings about the child nutrition programs.**
- **September 2015- Healthy-Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 expires, but all programs continue to operate.**
- **January 2016- Senate Agriculture Committee votes its CNR bill out of committee- Senate bill still has not gone to Senate floor.**
- **May 2016- House Education Committee votes its CNR bill (H.R. 5003) out of committee- includes a new three state block grant provision.**

What is a block grant and why is it so harmful to federal assistance programs?

- **A “block grant” is a lump sum of federal money that is provided to states to operate federal assistance programs.**
- ***What is the appeal?*** States are provided with a high level of autonomy to operate the programs and minimal requirements.
- ***What is the harm?*** The funding provided to states is capped- and often includes a long-term cut- eliminating the ability for the programs to respond to any change in need, population growth, etc. The federal government is no longer able to provide program oversight and ensure access to entitlement programs.

History of Block Grants



“We should retain a safety net for the child nutrition programs. We have not repealed the business cycle. When another recession occurs, states that choose block grants will have serious problems meeting rising caseload.” from the NYT

-[Richard Lugar](#)

- **THEN and NOW-**
 - **Newt Gingrich’s “Contract with America” (1994)**
 - **Paul Ryan’s “Expanding Opportunity in America” (2014)**
- **Block Granting Child Nutrition Programs**
 - **House bill in 1995 attempted to block grant school meal programs nationwide**
 - **Successfully defeated by bipartisan push back, led by Senator Dick Lugar, a Republican from Indiana**

Block granting the child nutrition programs would...

- **Block a state's ability to respond to increased need or rising program costs;**
- **Block the federal government's ability to establish national standards for nutrition quality of meals and eligibility requirements for children;**
- **Block the ability of the programs to accomplish their fundamental goals- reducing hunger, improving health, and supporting learning;**
- **And allow states to divert federal funds from providing school breakfast and lunch, afterschool snacks, and summer meals.**

The term “Block grant” is not included in this bill...

Also called:

- **State flexibility fund**
- **Flexible funding stream**
- **Flexible spending grants to states**
- **Demonstration pilots**
- **Innovative opportunity grants for states**

The House Child Nutrition Bill (H.R. 5003)

The “Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016” (H.R. 5003) includes a three state school meal block grant demonstration pilot in Section 109 on page 100.

- **Up to three states could opt to participate for three years, and could renew for an additional three years.**
- **Includes the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Special Milk, and Team Nutrition programs, also includes the seamless summer option and the school-based afterschool snacks available through NSLP.**
- **This block grant proposal would reduce funding, while giving states the authority to determine eligibility, meal service, and nutrition standards with minimal federal oversight.**

Reduced Funding

- **States would receive less funding than in FY2016.**
- **Funding is limited to meals served to students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals. Under current law, a modest reimbursement is provided for meals served to students in the paid category.**
- **The additional six cents per lunch provided to schools for meeting new federal nutrition standards is eliminated.**
- **The funding is capped and would not be adjusted, regardless of any increase in need, food inflation, or population growth.**

Meal Service

- **States are only required to provide one affordable meal a day to students on a school day, even though the funding had supported breakfast and lunch during the school year and the summer as well as afterschool snacks.**
- **States are not required to operate the program for specific length of time.**
- **States can set the amount charged for reduced-price school meals, eliminating the requirement to charge no more than \$0.30 for breakfast and \$0.40 for lunch.**

Change in Eligibility Determination

- **Eliminates “entitlement” status of school nutrition programs.**
- **Allows states to set more restrictive rules, thereby reducing the number of children eligible for free and reduced-price meals.**
- **States would no longer be required to set up systems to automatically qualify the most vulnerable families or children.**
- **States would no longer be required to have an application process that focuses on ensuring access to school meals.**

Change in Nutrition Standards

- **States would have no obligation to maintain national nutrition standards.**
- **There would be no requirement for states to follow any scientific advice to provide the most nutritious food to children.**
- **This would be detrimental to children's overall health and diet quality and would complicate the food and beverage industry ability to serve states that have different nutritional requirements.**

Allowable Uses of Funding

- **States can use the block grant funds to provide meals to school age children and up to 10% for administrative costs.**
- **States can use the funds to carry out any activity the state determines will support the goals of the block grant.**
- **States can use the funds in flexible ways to address community nutritional needs, to engage partners to deliver the meal programs, to develop and strengthen public and private partners, to support the community and nutritional needs of children and to achieve administrative and program cost savings.**

Change in Program Oversight

- **The US Department of Agriculture would have minimal oversight or authority under the block grant, including:**
 - **How the funding is spent**
 - **How the programs are structured and operated**
 - **How the state defines “healthy”/the nutritional value of the meals**



Larger Implications of Three State Block Grant Pilot

- **The block grant in H.R. 3005 would operate in only three states but that's almost certainly intended to be a foot in the door for future expansion.**
- **Speaker Ryan's Poverty Plan is expected to come out as early as this week and will likely contain one or more block grants, similar to the *Expanding Opportunity in America Proposal* he released in 2014.**
- **H.R. 5003 could be the first legislation to go to the floor that supports Speaker Ryan's plan to block grant programs that help children, families, the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable populations.**

What Can I Do To Help?

- 1) Sign the organizational statement opposing block grant provision bit.ly/1VA1C1u**
- 2) Share statement with all partner and affiliate organizations and encourage them to sign on**
- 3) Sample Tweet: Join @[your org twitter handle] & 1000s of orgs opposing school meal block grant. #stoptheblock #cnr2016 Sign statement today! bit.ly/1VA1C1u**

Weigh In With Your Members

**Call your Members of Congress urging them
to oppose House block grant provision
included in H.R. 5003**

- Capitol Switchboard – 202-225-3121
- Click here for a list of Twitter Handles for House Members: <http://bit.ly/211qy1k>

National Day of Action: June 9th



What: Rally at the Capitol & Virtual Rally

Who: Members of Congress, Advocates, Providers, Families

When: Thursday, June 9th (Rally at 1pm, All Day Virtual Rally)

Where: Congressional Visitors Center, Room 215 (House side), On Twitter #CNR2016 #StoptheBlock

Questions?

