FEEDING
NEW YORK STATE

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August 17, 2022

Vince Hall
Chief Government Relations Officer
Feeding America
1627 I Street NW, Suite 1000
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Mr. Hall,

We, the undersigned partner state associations from across the Feeding America network, write to you with the understanding that food is a human right and that every child deserves the guarantee of adequate nutrition. In the spirit of collegiality and our shared mission, we encourage Feeding America to support an overwhelmingly popular policy to ensure just that: *universal school meals.*

Feeding America is the largest anti-hunger organization in the country and commands tremendous influence at the highest levels of government – a clear testament to the incredible work this network does every day. With this comes a unique capacity to influence public policy as we fight to eradicate hunger in the United States.

Our member food banks are deeply grateful for the support Feeding America has shown us throughout the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Most recently, your team in Washington, D.C. advocated for an extension of child nutrition waivers as part of the *Keep Kids Fed Act.* We acknowledge the legislation helped avert a summer hunger crisis and increased reimbursement rates for schools facing higher food prices – the importance of which can't be overstated.

Yet despite this legislation, approximately 10 million children are set to lose free school meals at the start of the 2022-2023 school year when pandemic-era provisions expire. There is, however, a long-term solution to the issue of child hunger in the *Universal School Meals Program Act.* The legislation would:
- Guarantee free breakfast, lunch, and dinner for all public school children
- Provide summer meals to all children and summer EBT for low-income families
- Increase reimbursement rates for school meals
- Cancel school meal debt and reimburse schools for unpaid balances

- Strengthen community-based farms via a local food procurement incentive
- Improve and expand the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Research shows that guaranteed school meals improve academic performance, health outcomes, and attendance rates in children while supporting local economies and reducing costs for working families. The legislation is supported by partner organizations including the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), Hunger Free America, School Nutrition Association, Children's Defense Fund, American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Education Association (NEA), and UnidosUS. Additionally, polling shows that nearly 75% of voters – including a majority of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents – support the proposal.

We acknowledge that your leadership is exercised in the complex political environment of Washington, D.C. However, with the Biden Administration signaling its goal to eradicate hunger by 2030 – at the first White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in over 50 years – we believe now is the time for Feeding America to lend its support for a bold proposal that would guarantee school meals for all children.

Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

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Director of Policy & Advocacy
Feeding Texas

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Advocacy Coordinator
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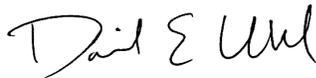
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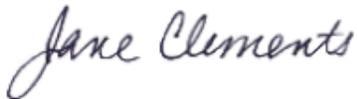
Jane Clements

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