



June 2, 2016

The Honorable Tim Walberg
U.S. House of Representatives
2436 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Opposition to the House Education and the Workforce Child Nutrition bill, specifically the three-state block grant proposal

Dear Congressman Walberg:

We are writing to you to express our profound disappointment in your recent vote in the House Education and the Workforce Committee to approve the Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill, H.R. 5300, which includes a three-state school meal block grant proposal. With the recent announcement that Michigan state revenues are coming in lower than expected forcing state policymakers to reduce proposed investments by \$460 million, it would be irresponsible for Congress to cut and block grant school meals which would potentially leave many Michigan children without meals and at risk of going hungry. We were equally disappointed at your vote to allow *all states* to block grant the school meal programs.

In Michigan, 16% of children live in households that are unsure of how or if they can provide enough food for their families. Additionally, the state child poverty rate remains stubbornly high with almost one of every four children living in poverty. More than 702,000 children in Michigan were eligible for the free- and reduced-price lunches last school year, including 51,401 students in Branch, Eaton, Hillsdale, Jackson, Lenawee, Monroe and Washtenaw counties.

A school meals block grant would put all of these children—and others—at risk of going without meals that many depend on and receiving proper nutrition, which directly impacts school performance and health outcomes.

As you may already know, block grants—a fixed amount of funding—do not respond to increased need during economic downturns. The rate of students receiving free- or reduced-price meals in Michigan increased by 29% since before the Great Recession in 2006. Under rising budget pressures during this time period, the state would not have been able to respond

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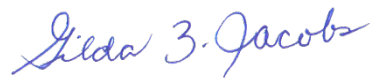
to the need, especially considering block grants do not keep pace with inflation. The cost of food rises over time and states would struggle to come up with the additional costs that the block grant would not be able to cover. In addition to these concerns, the current bill not only provides for a three-state block grant, but also includes cuts to the Federal reimbursement to the program that would be operated by the state.

Block granting school meals would provide less funding for states and place the burden on the states to either raise the revenue that would be necessary to meet the need or allow low-income children to go without free school meals. Michigan's economic growth is still lagging and there continues to be significant pressure on the state budget without sufficient revenues to invest in priorities. Changing the school meal program to a block grant would add to the state's financial struggles and put the well-being of all children in Michigan at-risk.

We urge you to oppose any measure that block grants school meals or makes access for children to receive meals more difficult.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can help any answer any questions or provide any local data.

Sincerely,



Gilda Z. Jacobs
President/CEO