

The Stop Child Summer Hunger Act of 2018

Introduced by Senator Patty Murray

Summer Hunger is a Pervasive Issue

During the school year, low-income children have the opportunity to receive free- or reduced-priced meals at school. However, millions of these same children go hungry during summer break. The federal Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) attempts to fill the summer meals gap by providing funding to nonprofit entities to serve food in a congregate setting to low-income children during summer breaks.

However, while some areas of the country see great success with the SFSP, many barriers to participation in the program remain, including unfamiliarity with the program or sites, lack of transportation, and limited food distribution hours. In fact, only about 14 percent of children who participate in free- or reduced-price meals during the school year participate in the SFSP, and fourteen states feed less than one-tenth of these low-income children through the SFSP.

The Stop Child Summer Hunger Act

The Stop Child Summer Hunger Act is a long-term, common-sense solution to reducing child hunger during school breaks. The legislation will provide families who have children eligible for free- and reduced-price school meals with an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card. This EBT card will include funds that the family can use to purchase food to replace the meals that the children would otherwise be receiving at school.

This legislation is modeled on the successful Summer EBT for Children demonstration project that has been piloted in 14 sites in 10 states and Indian Tribal Organizations. This pilot has seen very positive results, decreasing hunger among children by about 33 percent.

By providing benefits through an EBT card, this legislation would help reduce food insecurity by providing parents an effective way to access food for their child. Summer EBT empowers parents because it is accommodating of cultural food choices, children's food preferences, and food allergies. It also ensures that transportation or work schedule challenges, weather, or child or parent illness are not barriers to a child receiving vital nutrition.