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## Close the Child Hunger Gap: Support the Summer Meals Act of 2015 (S.613/H.R.1728)

Summer meal programs connect low-income children with meals during the summer months. Still, for every 6 low-income children who get a lunch at school every day, only 1 also receives meals during the summer.

The Summer Meals Act of 2015 (S.613/H.R.1728) was introduced in the Senate by Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) and Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), and in the House by Representatives by Reps. Don Young (R-Alaska) and Rick Larsen (D-Wash.). The bill aims to strengthen and expand access to summer meal programs by accomplishing the following four goals:

- 1. Better integration of summer education and meals programs.** Currently, summer meal programs require that 50% of the children in the area be eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. This bars many educational summer programs from participating in summer meals. For example, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, which provide academic enrichment programs that help students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math, have a 40% threshold level. *The Summer Meals Act of 2015 would update the area eligibility from 50% to 40% so that communities with significant numbers of low-income, hungry children would be able to receive meals and continue learning throughout the summer.*
- 2. Reduced red tape for public-private partnerships.** Many public agencies and private nonprofit organizations that operate summer programs also provide high-quality afterschool programming and afterschool nutrition during the school year. The issue has been fixed for schools, which can provide summer meals through the National School Lunch Program. However, other non-school entities are required to operate multiple child nutrition programs, which means they have separate applications and different programmatic rules. *The Summer Meals Act of 2015 would reduce the red tape by allowing public and private organizations to complete one application so they can provide children meals after school, on weekends, and during school holidays.*



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- 3. Improved nutrition in rural, underserved, and hard-to-reach areas.** Transportation is one of the biggest barriers to Summer Nutrition participation due to the distances that children must travel to get to a site. Getting children to the summer meal sites that offer high-quality educational and enrichment activities is a vital way to support access in underserved areas. *This USDA program would provide transportation for underserved areas and promote innovative and creative ways to increase access to summer meals.*
- 4. Eliminate the need to skip a meal for children of working parents.** Many children participate in evening enrichment programs during the school year and summer months when their parents are working. *The Summer Meals Act of 2015 would provide the option of serving two meals and a snack or three meals during the summer so that children can continue learning throughout the afternoon.*

