

June 3, 2015

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Education,

As a network of pediatricians, public health researchers, and children's health and policy experts, we know that nutritious food is an essential cornerstone in supporting the health and development of young children. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides healthy food to children by reimbursing eligible child care providers for meals and snacks that meet specific nutritional guidelines. In addition, the program supports providers through on-site visits, group classes, and ongoing technical assistance. We write today in support of Section 2 Chapter 15 of H.429, "An act relative to ensuring the wellbeing of children in the Commonwealth," which will increase participation in CACFP by reducing administrative burdens, costs, and state regulations that create barriers for eligible child care centers and providers.

Children's HealthWatch research has shown that participation in CACFP improves the health of young children. Previously, Children's HealthWatch identified a subset of children in our dataset who were highly likely to be participating in CACFP (ages 12-36 months in subsidized child care and all meals were provided by the child care provider). We compared these children to children meeting the same criteria with the exception that meals in child care were supplied from home. Children whose meals were supplied by the child care provider were:

- 28% less likely to be in fair or poor health
- 26% less likely to be hospitalized
- More likely to have a healthy weight and height for their age

Increased participation in CACFP could lead to significant cost savings for families and the healthcare system through children's better health and decreased hospitalizations.

Passage of Section 2 Chapter 15 of H.429 will ensure that children in child care settings across the Commonwealth will have better access to the nutrition necessary for their rapidly growing bodies and brains. Helping parents to work and/or study with their minds at ease, knowing that their young children are receiving the healthful nutrition they need, is win for the Commonwealth and for families and children.

We urge the committee to favorably report out this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,



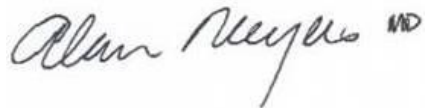
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