

**EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE**

**Congressman George Miller, Chairman**

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Press Office, 202-226-0853

**Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On “Improving Children’s Health: Strengthening Federal Child Nutrition Programs”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on “Improving Children’s Health: Strengthening Federal Child Nutrition Programs”.*

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Good Morning.

This morning we’ll examine how stronger nutrition programs can help fight the childhood obesity epidemic and help improve our students’ learning and health.

Today, almost one in three children are obese.

Child obesity affects all aspects of children’s lives from their physical well-being, to their academic success to their self-confidence.

The health of our children should be a top national priority.

As many of you know, the First Lady, Michelle Obama, recently announced that ending childhood obesity will be her first major policy initiative.

Last month, she launched the “Let’s Move” campaign to ensure that children born today will grow up to be healthy adults.

By offering a realistic goal of making children healthier and more active within a generation, she has set the stage for dramatic improvements.

To help achieve this goal, her initiative contains four key pillars:

- Getting parents more involved and informed about nutrition and exercise;
- Making healthy foods more accessible and affordable;
- Increasing attention to physical activity; and
- Improving the quality of food in the school meal programs.

The First Lady and I both know that the government alone cannot curb this epidemic.

Individuals, families, communities and the private sector all share responsibility.

I welcome her involvement and look forward to working with her on this initiative.

This committee can play a key role in this effort and today's hearing provides an opportunity to hear from stakeholders.

For over sixty years, the child nutrition programs have helped families who have struggled with the choices of putting food on the table or paying another bill.

The school lunch and school breakfast program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the WIC program have been a nutritional safety net for these families – serving nearly 45 million individuals across the country.

Studies show that pregnant women who participate in WIC have healthier pregnancies and healthy babies.

Studies have also shown that low-income women are less likely to breastfeed than higher-income mothers.

But thanks to federal, state and local efforts, the WIC program has improved breastfeeding rates among WIC mothers in this population.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program also provides critical nutrition support to young children.

This program helps make nutritious meals and snacks possible for three million children in child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start and after-school programs.

And we know that that the meals children receive in these programs are more nutritious and well-balanced than in other child care programs.

But despite its success, tough economic times and paperwork requirements have forced some sponsors to make the difficult decision to stop administering this program.

For example, in South Central Los Angeles, one of the highest-risk areas for hunger and obesity in California, no organization was able to sponsor this program last year.

As a result, more than 5,000 low income young children lost access to healthy meals and snacks.

If we are serious about improving children's health, we have to make these programs, and other critical sources of nutrition, a priority.

But the discussion doesn't end there.

As the First Lady has said, we must also consider the role schools play in providing children with healthy meals and environments that promote academic achievement.

We expect children to come to school prepared to learn.

But studies show that hunger and poor nutrition can be major barriers to their success.

Our work to reauthorize our child nutrition programs presents a great opportunity to change the way children eat, to expand their access to nutritious meals and to end the child hunger crisis in our country.

We must ensure that schools have the support they need to provide high-quality and safe meals so kids can make healthy choices.

We must also ensure that all eligible children can actually access these programs by removing barriers families face when enrolling in the school meal programs, like confusing application forms.

Today we will learn more about the work that lies ahead to provide all children with the healthy, nutritious and safe meals they need to lead healthy and successful lives.

I want to thank our witnesses for joining us today. I look forward to hearing their testimony.

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