



June 17, 2010

THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT
KAISER PERMANENTE
THE KRESGE FOUNDATION
NEMOURS
ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION
W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

The Honorable Blanche Lincoln
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Ranking Republican Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids (HHFK) Act

Dear Senator Lincoln and Senator Chambliss:

This letter is in response to your request for comment about the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*. With the country's largest health foundations and nonprofit health systems as members, the Convergence Partnership¹ is very concerned about childhood obesity and is supporting efforts to reverse the trend and prevent the epidemic from getting worse. We commend the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee's unanimous approval of the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*, which reauthorizes federal child nutrition programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), including the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

This far-reaching, bipartisan legislation could impact millions of American children. Therefore, we strongly urge the Senate to pass the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* as quickly as possible. The childhood obesity epidemic, the economic downturn, and growing issues of food insecurity all make it critical to pass this legislation this year.

¹ In 2006, a collaboration of funders came together to create the **Healthy Eating Active Living Convergence Partnership**, with the shared goal of changing policies and environments to better achieve the vision of healthy people living in healthy places. The steering committee includes representatives from The California Endowment, Kaiser Permanente, Nemours, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Kresge Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention serve as technical advisors on the committee. PolicyLink, is the program director for the Partnership. <http://www.convergencepartnership.org>.

The recently released report on Household Food Security in the U.S. found that far too many households face challenges in putting enough food on the table. Competing household expenses, compounded by the limited availability of affordable, healthy foods in many low-income communities, has contributed to both poor nutrition and obesity among children and their families. This takes a visible toll on children's healthy growth and development, contributes to poor academic outcomes, and puts children at risk for chronic disease.

In 2006, with increased evidence that the environment in which children and families live, learn, work, and play significantly impacts their health, the foundations and health care institutions formed the Convergence Partnership. Together, the Convergence Partnership focuses on creating environments that support healthy eating and active living. The *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* will improve child nutrition, promote healthy child development, reduce hunger and food insecurity, and enhance academic performance. This bill also provides a critical opportunity to improve the quality of foods served to our children by emphasizing and supporting the provision of healthful, locally sourced foods including fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

In particular, we support the following provisions as critical steps forward:

- Update the meal patterns and nutrition standards for school meals and establish nutrition standards for all foods and beverages sold and served in schools outside the school meals programs
- Connect more children to healthy local food through Farm-to-School programs by providing funding to help schools establish programs to source local foods into their cafeterias
- Expand access to all child nutrition programs through measures such as direct certification and community area eligibility
- Simplify administrative requirements and provide technical assistance and training to support Child and Adult Care Food Program providers in both updating nutritional quality standards to meet current nutrition science and dietary recommendations and implementing daily physical activity and reduced screen time
- Increase reimbursement levels for child nutrition program meals and snacks and tie higher reimbursement to nutritional standards
- Expand support for school kitchen equipment, training of school food service workers, and support for establishing local procurement of fruits, vegetables, and other healthful foods
- Support WIC program management improvements and emphasize breastfeeding promotion and support in the WIC program

We support the most robust funding possible for this measure. Also, we encourage you to find offsets that avoid the unintended consequences of undermining environmental programs and goals. In addition, the Partnership supports alignment of provisions in this bill with the recommendations in the

recently released report of the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity and the First Lady's *Let's Move!* campaign.

We would be delighted to meet with you and your staff to elaborate on our recommendations and discuss ways to work together to improve child health and nutrition. Please don't hesitate to contact us to explore these issues further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judith Bell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Judith Bell
Program Director, Convergence Partnership
President, PolicyLink

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry Cohen". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name being more prominent.

Larry Cohen
Advisor, Convergence Partnership
Executive Director, Prevention Institute