

Duckworth And Durbin Join Chairwoman Stabenow In Introducing Bill To Extend School And Summer Meal Flexibilities To Feed Children

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – This week, U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) cosponsored the *Support Kids Not Red Tape Act* with Senator Debbie

Stabenow (D-MI), Chairwoman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and a bipartisan group of their colleagues. The bill makes sure the crucial U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) school meal flexibilities that have fed children throughout the COVID-19 pandemic continue from June 30, 2022, to September 30, 2023.

“As someone whose family relied on public nutrition programs after my father lost his job, I recognize that food insecurity is a systemic issue,” said Duckworth. “The *Support Kids Not Red Tape Act* is an opportunity to help reduce the number of children who have to worry about where their next meal is coming from by helping ensure millions of kids across the nation have food to eat, and I’m proud to help introduce it alongside Senators Stabenow and Durbin.”

“Hunger makes it harder for children to learn, be healthy, and succeed. And the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of school meals in providing steady nutrition for kids. We must ensure that these programs stay in place so that millions of kids across the country can count on their next meal,” said Durbin. “With the *Support Kids Not Red Tape Act*, we’re putting our nation’s kids first and maintaining the school meal flexibilities used during the height of the pandemic to keep children fed.”

“We should make it easier for kids to get the meals they need – not harder. Our bill cuts red tape and keeps the priority on giving children the healthy meals they need and deserve,” said Stabenow. “As we come out of this pandemic, schools are doing their best - but it takes time for them to transition back to their operations before COVID. We can’t let hungry kids get caught in the middle. Without this support, up to 30 million kids who get food at school will see their essential breakfast and lunch meals disrupted. And millions of hungry kids who rely on summer meals may have nowhere to go to get food.”

With 90% of our schools still facing many challenges as they return to normal operations, USDA flexibilities give our schools and summer meal programs much-needed support to deal with ongoing food service issues and keep kids fed. The bill will also help schools transition back to normal meal operations under the National School Lunch Program. USDA requested this authority be extended in the omnibus.

Along with Duckworth, Durbin and Stabenow, this legislation is co-sponsored by U.S. Senators Murkowski (R-AK), Heinrich (D-NM), Collins (R-ME), Manchin (D-WV), Gillibrand (D-NY), Casey (D-PA), Van Hollen (D-MD), Smith (D-MN), Brown (D-OH), Baldwin (D-WI), Booker (D-NJ), Lujan (D-NM), Klobuchar (D-MN), Warnock (D-GA), Markey (D-MA), Hirono (D-HI), Sanders (I-VT), Reed (D-RI), Leahy (D-VT), Wyden (D-OR), Shaheen (D-NH), Hassan (D-NH), Bennet (D-CO), Merkley (D-OR), Warren (D-MA), Padilla (D-CA), Warner (D-VA), Murray (D-WA), Cardin (D-MD),

Coons (D-DE), Cortez Masto (D-NV), Carper (D-DE), Schatz (D-HI), Peters (D-MI), King (I-ME), Feinstein (D-CA), Rosen (D-NV), Menendez (D-NJ), Kaine (D-VA), Blumenthal (D-CT), Murphy (D-CT), Hickenlooper (D-CO), Whitehouse (D-RI), Kelly (D-AZ), Sinema (D-AZ), Ossoff (D-GA), Tester (D-MT), Schumer (D-NY) and Cantwell (D-WA).

Several anti-hunger and nutrition advocates have supported the *Support Kids Not Red Tape Act* to reiterate the importance of these flexibilities and applauded the Senators' bill to keep critical flexibilities for school nutrition programs to feed children.