

Letter: Congress must act now

April 22, 2022



Without swift action from Congress, children in Oregon are at risk of losing access to meals this summer and many more next school year.

That's because critical child nutrition waivers will soon expire and so far, Congress has failed to authorize USDA to extend them.

These waivers are an important tool that allow schools and community organizations to serve meals in ways that work best for their communities while they grapple with ongoing pandemic-related challenges like supply chain disruptions, rising food prices and staffing shortages.

But in a few months, meal programs will once again be turned on their heads, forced to transform how they operate; many won't be able to operate at all.

Without flexibility from the waivers, many schools will be unable to open summer meal sites. Children in rural communities, will be at particular risk when meal providers will no longer be allowed to meet kids where they are by reimagining traditional summer meal service.

School food budgets, already taking a hit from rising food costs, will go deeper into the red because of decreased reimbursements. Schools will also face financial penalties for not meeting federal nutrition requirements if certain products aren't available due to supply chain disruptions.

Congress and the White House must work together to fix this. Senators Wyden and Merkley, please don't pull the rug out from under schools working to feed kids. Doing so would fail the 1 in 7 kids facing hunger in Oregon

Eleni Towns

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