



BOB CASEY

FIGHTING *for* PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES

The Child Care Nutrition Enhancement Act of 2023 – S.

U.S. Senator Bob Casey

Healthy, nutritious meals are essential for all children, especially during their formative years. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) helps child care providers administer healthy meals and snacks to more than four million children enrolled in family child care homes, child care centers, Head Start programs, and after school programs. Studies have shown that children in CACFP receive meals that are nutritionally superior to those served to children in child care settings without CACFP participation. Despite the positive effects of CACFP, current reimbursement rates and outdated program policies leave child care providers with significant financial barriers while operating CACFP.

Even as the child care sector faces strains on multiple fronts, providers are withdrawing from CACFP due to inadequate reimbursement rates for the cost of food, fuel, and administrative requirements of the program. Participation rates among family child care providers have declined drastically as a result of CACFP's tiering structure, which applies varying reimbursement rates only to family child care providers depending on the local poverty level associated with the provider's residence. Family child care providers who qualify for Tier II reimbursements receive 40 to 73 percent less than the amount of Tier I rates. The gap between reimbursement rates and program compliance costs is becoming too wide for family child care providers to manage.

The Child Care Nutrition Enhancement Act seeks to enhance child nutrition and health, reduce hunger, and augment child development and educational readiness. Specifically, the Child Care Nutrition Enhancement Act would improve meal reimbursements provided by CACFP to help provide necessary stability to child care providers by:

- **Increasing Meal Reimbursements by 10 Cents per Meal:** Current reimbursement rates are too low and are not tied to rising food costs. This provision would provide a baseline reimbursement rate increase of 10 cents for each eligible meal and snack and adjust future reimbursement rates for changes in food costs.
- **Eradicating the Tier Structure:** This provision would eliminate CACFP's tiering structure and allow all family child care providers to receive the same reimbursement rate for meals and snacks, providing for a more even distribution of program benefits.
- **Providing Reimbursement for Meals that Family Child Care Providers Issue to Their Own Children:** This provision would allow family child care providers to serve reimbursable meals and snacks to their own children who are enrolled in the program when providing meals and snacks to other children in their care.

Cosponsors

This bill is cosponsored by Senators Baldwin, Blumenthal, Brown, Fetterman, Gillibrand, Hirono, Markey, Reed, Sanders, Shaheen, Smith, Warren, and Welch.