

PHILANTHROPIC EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CHILDHOOD HUNGER AND NUTRITION

In 2008, nearly 49 million people in the United States lived in food-insecure households.ⁱ This included an estimated 16 million children in households with either low or very low food security.ⁱⁱ The number was bad enough before—36 million in 2007—but, not surprisingly, the recession, unemployment, falling wages, and rising food prices drove the numbers up significantly in 2008.ⁱⁱⁱ However, a recent study using extensive Gallup polling data through 2009 suggests that the rates of food insecurity may well not have increased over the past year, despite the worsening recession and rising unemployment, very possibly because of the stimulus bill, the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which included significant expansions in the nation’s safety net for low-income families and kids.^{iv} Although official 2009 US Department of Agriculture (USDA) data have not yet been released, it appears that ARRA’s increases in food stamp benefits and other supports had their intended effects of mitigating food insecurity and other economic harm over the past year. As detailed further in this paper, at least with regard to preventing child hunger, the recent improvements to the nation’s safety net appear to have had meaningful impact.

This year, policymakers will address important hunger and nutrition public policy questions at both the federal and state levels—in particular, through reauthorization of the federal Child Nutrition Act. Child nutrition, food insecurity, and hunger are again coming to the forefront of the nation’s consciousness and policy agenda.

(In this report, we use the common term “hunger” interchangeably with the more technically correct USDA terminology, “food insecure.”) To be sure, there are a number of

income support programs and policies that play a vital role in stabilizing families. Programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), unemployment insurance, and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) are critical to providing the income families need to avoid food insecurity. However, for this document, we will hone in on the specific hunger and nutrition policies that directly address hunger in America. **Through a background review, a short summary of philanthropic influence and past successes, and an outline of current opportunities and next steps, we hope to address how the philanthropic community can continue to inform and influence this year’s important policy deliberations on these child nutrition and hunger issues.**

“We have a great opportunity right now to combat child hunger and improve the health and nutrition of children across the country, and we cannot let this moment pass us by.”

Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack

BACKGROUND

The front page of the November 30, 2009, issue of *The New York Times* captured the nation's attention with Jason DeParle's article, "Food Stamp Use Soars, and Stigma Fades," and awakened many to the 2008 increases in food insecurity and growing reliance on the nation's nutrition safety net both before and during the recession:

"With food stamp use at record highs and climbing every month, a program once scorned as a failed welfare scheme now helps feed one in eight Americans and one in four children...."

Virtually all have incomes near or below the federal poverty line, but their eclectic ranks testify to the range of people struggling with basic needs. They include single mothers and married couples, the newly jobless and the chronically poor, longtime recipients of welfare checks and workers whose reduced hours or slender wages leave pantries bare.

While the numbers have soared during the recession, the path was cleared in better times when the Bush administration led a campaign to erase the program's stigma, calling food stamps "nutritional aid" instead of welfare, and made it easier to apply. That bipartisan effort capped an extraordinary reversal from the 1990s, when some conservatives tried to abolish the program, Congress enacted large cuts and bureaucratic hurdles chased many needy people away...."

There are 239 counties in the United States where at least a quarter of the population receives food stamps, according to an analysis of local data collected by The New York Times."

Likewise, extensive press coverage and data analyses by USDA, advocates, and others have documented an increase in families using school lunch and breakfast programs, afterschool and summer food programs, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Other media accounts highlight families' needing to revert to food pantries and soup kitchens to make it through the month. Anecdotal reports also suggest that for some families, protecting their children from the recession's impacts has not been possible. For example, the Grow Clinic in Boston noted that in late 2009, doctors were seeing more and more children diagnosed with "failure to thrive," where children's growth and development were not on track with other kids their age, a sign that they might not be getting enough nutritious food.^v

Advocates and policymakers have worked tirelessly in the past decade to address one of America's most striking contradictions—that in the wealthiest nation on earth, there was a rising number of people living in food-insecure households, at least through 2008. On the campaign trail, President Obama vowed to end childhood hunger by 2015. Administration officials, state governments, and policymakers have also united to ensure that the main program addressing food insecurity—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, commonly called "food stamps") responds at this time of national crisis. Indeed, SNAP/food

stamps has been a success story—rates of participation, as the *New York Times* story points out, are rapidly increasing and today one of every eight Americans is a SNAP/food stamp participant.^{vi} It is fair to say that the food stamp program is now the single most powerful element of the nation’s safety net for low-income and vulnerable families and kids.

A seeming contradiction to the state of childhood hunger, childhood obesity also has been rising rapidly, including among the poor. As families revert to cheaper, but less healthful, substitutes for nutritious foods, and as economic and psychological stress continue and grow for low- and moderate-income families, it is clear that we must not only focus on access to food, but also on the quality of the foods available. Indeed, nearly one in three children in America is overweight or obese^{vii} and our nation spends \$150 billion per year treating obesity-related illnesses for children and adults.^{viii}

Part of this problem is the availability of quality, nutritious foods. Many inner cities and rural areas are virtual “food deserts,” with little or no access to full-service supermarkets. In fact, more than 23 million Americans in low-income areas, including 6.5 million children, have to travel more than a mile to access a supermarket.^{ix} For example, Detroit has not a single supermarket within its boundaries—only corner stores and convenience shops, selling overpriced and undernourishing snacks and food products.

School meals offer another area where policymakers can affect the quality of food children can access. With more than 31 million children participating in the National School Lunch Program^x and more than 11 million participating in the National School Breakfast Program,^{xi} school cafeterias are reaching a sizeable portion of low-income children. Indeed, many children consume at least half of their daily calories at school.^{xii} But, what they are eating frequently has been found to be filled with too much sugar, salt, and fat, and to be lacking in whole grains and healthy produce. Further, there are often a la carte lines, snack bars, and snack machines, along with soda vending machines that contribute to unhealthy eating habits at school. Unlike the school meal programs, these foods are exempt from most federal nutrition requirements. Ultimately, many schools in our nation are perpetuating the problem of obesity rather than helping to solve it.

Responding to these issues, the Obama administration has made significant gains on food and nutrition policies in the past 12 months, building on progress made during the Bush administration. The ARRA included a number of efforts to address rising unemployment, economic hardship, and food insecurity. In particular, the administration and Congress provided a \$20 billion temporary increase for SNAP/food stamps, boosting monthly family benefits by an average of \$40, as well as additional funding for food banks, school meals, and WIC. Income gains including the increases in refundable EITC and child tax credits were also a key ARRA anti-hunger/economic security measure. The USDA has also worked to remove barriers to enrollment and to expand outreach in various child nutrition programs such as school breakfast and WIC. They have further worked to increase the amount of commodities delivered through both The Emergency Food Assistance Program (which provides food to food banks) and school meal programs, providing an additional \$475 million in “bonus” commodity distributions in 2009.

In addition to these efforts, the recent 2010 Agriculture Appropriations Bill and other 2009 and 2010 legislation included several enhancements that will continue to advance the work of improving the nutrition, health, and well-being of children. Through this legislation, for example, Congress funded an \$85 million Summer Demonstration Project to test innovative ways to provide food to children in urban and rural settings during the summer months. They also provided \$25 million to the School Lunch Program to provide funds for necessary equipment schools need to run the program. The USDA has also received budgetary funds to advance direct certification of free school meals in states with low participation rates, a program that identifies children in SNAP or TANF households and automatically certifies them for school nutrition programs. The administration and Congress initiated a \$5 million bonus payment for states that excel in promoting breastfeeding through their WIC program. Finally, Congress has raised to 13 (plus the District of Columbia) the number of states receiving federal funds to pay for suppers for children in afterschool programs when care runs into the late afternoon or evening.

Finally, just last February, Mrs. Obama launched a “Let’s Move” initiative, an effort to help focus the nation on the childhood obesity issue and to address many of the food quality issues that seem to be driving the alarming statistics. The effort involves four key pillars: “getting parents more informed about nutrition and exercise, improving the quality of food in schools, making healthy foods more affordable and accessible for families, and focusing more on physical education.”

“Year after year and decade after decade, the history of America’s conscience is what happens with food stamps. It’s a remarkable history.”

Journalist Daniel Schorr

All of these recent improvements to the food and nutrition safety net almost certainly helped cushion low-income families and kids from some of the worst effects of the recession. According to a report recently released by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), analyzing Gallup survey data of more than half a million people: “The dramatic rise in food hardship in 2008 tracked key developments in the economy, including unemployment and skyrocketing food prices.”^{xiii} The national unemployment rate was 5 percent in January 2008 and 6.9 percent by November 2008; meanwhile, food prices rose by a “shocking 7.5 percent from October 2007 to October 2008.”^{xiv}

But, then, the FRAC analysis reports, the food hardship rate flattened out in 2009 and actually declined slightly. While the economic crisis continued, several factors likely were responsible for keeping the food hardship rate from ascending. First, due to the recession and other factors, food prices stopped skyrocketing and began falling in late 2008, and SNAP/food stamp beneficiaries received in October 2008 a regular annual cost-of-living increase, which, because of the past year’s rapid inflation, was an 8.5 percent increase in maximum benefits.^{xv} Then, beginning in April 2009, SNAP/food stamp beneficiaries received on average an 18 percent increase in monthly benefits as part of the economic recovery legislation, ARRA, which also

made other improvements in benefits access and amounts to programs including unemployment insurance, TANF, jobs programs, health insurance, and other supports.^{xvi} At the same time, states were choosing liberalizing SNAP/food stamp options that opened the program to millions more people, while the recession alone added millions more.

Clearly, as a counter-cyclical entitlement program, SNAP/food stamps largely did what it should do—grow to meet the need. Participation rose as well in other nutrition programs, especially school meals and WIC. Consequently, the FRAC report found that, “From the first quarter of 2009 to the third quarter, the food hardship rate dropped nearly a full point.”^{xvii} Good news, indeed. However, many of these benefits—and likely the recent improvements in outcomes—will expire in 2010 and 2011 unless Congress decides to continue them.

The administration plans to do more during the next 12 months to make good on its 2015 promise to end childhood hunger. As part of the anticipated 2010 reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act, the Obama administration has proposed an unprecedented increase of \$10 billion over 10 years—\$1 billion per year—to improve child nutrition programs. Also, through the upcoming reauthorization process, the administration has identified several interlocking priorities to address child hunger and nutrition, including:

- Increased participation and access to school meals through direct certification and streamlining programs and paperwork
- Increased participation in school breakfast programs
- Improved nutritional quality of school meals
- Increased nutrition standards for all foods sold in schools throughout the school day (i.e., nutrition standards for competitive foods such as the food and drinks sold in vending machines, school stores and snack bars that are not a part of USDA food programs)
- Expanded financing for training and technical assistance for school food programs and kitchen equipment for schools
- Increased physical activity through recommendations in the Let’s Move initiative
- Expanded farm-to-school programs to bring local, fresh produce to the cafeteria

Congressional leaders have other priorities as well for reauthorization, including increased reimbursement for school lunch, improved nutrition standards in child care, and federal funding for supper in afterschool programs that run into the late afternoon or early evening.

These efforts are commendable and represent key milestones on the path toward the goal of ending childhood hunger. But, with the economic crisis and anticipated slow recovery, and the high food insecurity/hunger rates even before the recession, there is much more to be done if we plan to truly eradicate childhood hunger in the next five years. Here, we outline just some of the important steps along the way and point to specific steps philanthropy can, and indeed, must take in the months ahead to advance the goal of ending childhood hunger.

THE ROLE OF PHILANTHROPY IN INFLUENCING CHANGE

The philanthropic community understands the critical importance of food and food security for children’s health, development, learning, and well-being. Our investments are rooted in the data about the challenges of food insecurity for children and promising practices in addressing these needs. We know, for example, that households with children are nearly twice as likely to experience food insecurity as those without children.^{xviii} Additionally, food insecurity hits not only families in large urban areas but also those in rural areas. USDA also notes that in 2007, 85 percent of households with food insecurity among children contained one or more adults working full- or part-time.^{xix}

We also know that food security is a critical part of children’s overall well-being. Children living in homes that face food insecurity are more likely to be sick and hospitalized, are more susceptible to obesity, and are more likely to suffer delays in cognitive development.^{xx} As a report from the coalition of National Anti-Hunger Organizations summarizes, “undernourished children under age three cannot learn as much, as fast or as well because their condition changes the fundamental architecture of the brain and central nervous system.”^{xxi} Later on, nutritionally at-risk children are less able to concentrate and perform well in school. However, “children who eat breakfast score better on tests, show improved learning skills and memory retention, and have lower rates of tardiness and absenteeism.”^{xxii}

Philanthropy’s approach to addressing these vital aspects of child well-being has been multifaceted, sustained, and disciplined. Funders have financed high-quality research and dissemination of key child health and nutrition information to inform our own efforts and those of the field. We have also heavily invested in the policy reform, communications, and advocacy infrastructure at the federal level that can mobilize and influence federal efforts to expand programs and ease access. A similar infrastructure has been funded at the state and local levels to help advocates expand policies and system practices to help ensure children receive the food supports they need. Support has also gone to national groups to provide information, data, best practices, and technical assistance to these state and local groups. Funders have also provided direct support to programs on the front lines of ending hunger in their communities. Community foundations along with others have long been active

HALF

...of all pregnant women in the country, and nearly half of all infants, receive WIC benefits each month.

HALF

...of all children in the United States will use SNAP/food stamp benefits at some time by age 20.

51%

...of all adults will use SNAP/ food stamps at some point in time between the ages of 20 and 65 years.

90%

...of all African-American children will participate in SNAP/ food stamps at some point.

Data provided by the Food Research Action Center

supporters of a food delivery infrastructure, by funding the network of more than 200 food banks and more than 60,000 agencies delivering food to low-income clients across the country. Finally, some foundations have worked to invest in demonstration and place-based efforts to ensure access to food and nutrition benefits for individuals and their children.

In all of this work, philanthropy has aimed to link and bridge our efforts, utilizing common values and networks, forging consensus, and bridging political divides by working on a bipartisan basis with diverse constituencies. This advocacy and direct service infrastructure is increasingly robust, strategic, interconnected, and able to respond quickly and effectively to emerging opportunities as well as economic challenges.

POLICY ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

Here we outline a number of policy accomplishments specifically in the area of hunger and nutrition that have resulted from strategic philanthropic investment. Indeed, advocacy on income-support programs as well as direct service investments are equally important in ensuring that children and families in thousands of communities do not go without a meal. But, for the purposes of this report, we hope to demonstrate how policies on hunger and nutrition can change under the influence of strong philanthropic leadership and hopefully inspire further policy work in the months and years ahead as we aim to end childhood hunger by 2015.

Federal Results

Through intentional and strategic investments, the funder community has achieved significant influence and has leveraged returns over the past decade. Key legislation for child hunger and nutrition includes the Farm Bill, which is generally authorized every five years, and governs programs such as SNAP/food stamps, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and commodities for schools. The Child Nutrition Act, also authorized every five years, covers critical programs such as school lunch and breakfast, WIC, afterschool and summer food, and child care food. In addition to these large legislative vehicles, there are also appropriations bills, reconciliation bills, and stand-alone bills that work to address children's hunger, nutrition, and obesity issues. And, as noted earlier, the 2009 ARRA included more than \$100 billion in expanded programs and tax credits that were targeted toward lower-income families.

In all of these debates, members of the Grantmakers Income Security Taskforce (GIST) and Grantmakers for Children, Youth & Families (GCYF) have supported many of the grantees that have become leaders in moving policies forward for children and families and fighting cuts and other policy changes that would negatively impact them.

One example of our sustained influence on child hunger and nutrition occurred through the Assessing the New Federalism (ANF) project in the mid-1990s, heavily financed by GIST members, which allowed the Urban Institute to document the effects of abrupt cuts in food stamp eligibility and benefits in the wake of the 1996 welfare reform law. Reports noted that between the time welfare reform was passed in 1996 and September 1998, 6.2 million persons had left food stamps (25 percent of the caseload). Analyses suggested that some, though not all, of this decline had to do with the exit of families from the welfare rolls. Additionally,

changes made in 1996 limited eligibility and restricted enrollment for many potential recipients. And states were actively pushing eligible people off food stamps in the wake of the antiwelfare politics and “antidependency” rhetoric that culminated in 1996.

But, beginning in 1998, a number of stakeholders—including Congress, some states (including Republican as well as Democratic governors), the Clinton and Bush administrations, as well as a strongly financed group of advocates at the federal and state level—began working to improve food stamp policies and practices, especially for low-income working families. Changes came in Congress, in USDA policies and attitudes, and in some states’ attitudes and policies, with the number of states building throughout the 2000–2009 decade.

Based on the ANF research findings and strong work by grantees in documenting the plight of needy families left off the program, a large network of grantees, including national leaders such as FRAC, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), and the National Council of La Raza, worked to restore many of the food stamp cuts and revise many of the restrictive policies, including the virtual elimination of immigrant eligibility. In 1998 and 2001, they succeeded in getting legislation restoring eligibility to “qualified” immigrants and all legal immigrant children, as well as enacting a host of provisions in the 2002 Farm Bill that made it easier for states to administer food stamps for working families. The eventual 2002 Farm Bill provided more than \$6 billion in new funding for the food stamp program.

In the next round of reauthorization of the Farm Bill, key grantees supported by GIST and GCYF members again played a significant role in advancing food and nutrition policies for children and their families. The 2008 Farm Bill advances were especially significant, including an increase in the minimum standard deduction and an automatic cost of living adjustment added to the deduction beginning in 2010, an increase in the minimum benefit amount, the elimination of the cap on the amount a household can deduct for dependent care expenses in determining eligibility, and many other provisions. Congress provided \$7.8 billion in new food stamp spending over the next 10 years to cover the costs of these provisions. The legislation also expanded funding for TEFAP, raising the funding level by more than 30 percent between 2008 and 2009, and will index the funding amounts for inflation for federal FY2010 through federal FY2012.

There were many contributors to the 2008 legislation, and a number of grantees were aligned to ensure a successful passage of this bill, even through a presidential veto and congressional override of the veto. According to many advocates and observers, the most important single factor in the bill’s outcome was a communication effort called the Food Stamp Challenge. Members of Congress, city council members, journalists, students, advocates, religious leaders, and others lived for a few days or a week on the food purchasable with the average food stamp allotment—just \$3.00 a day—and then wrote, blogged, or spoke about it. This helped strengthen the bipartisan support for this program and additionally transformed hearts and minds about food stamp policy.

Additionally, leadership within the hunger and nutrition communities over the course of the past few reauthorization efforts has been successful in building a 21st century benefits program.

Numerous policy changes and administrative efforts over the past 10 years have, for example, resulted in innovative outreach efforts with federal financing to support activities to help enroll eligible clients. Additionally, federal policies have also been instrumental in streamlining benefit application processes at the state level and have helped infuse technology into the receipt of food stamp benefits—largely through the now-required use of electronic benefit transfer cards to deliver benefits. This work, though often in the “weeds” of state and federal administrative systems and technology systems, has been on the leading edge of helping families receive the full package of benefits that they are eligible to receive and helping states align programs and systems across food stamps, Medicaid, and welfare programs to better meet the needs of individuals and families.

Finally, as mentioned previously, ARRA expansions provided significant gains for food and nutrition policies affecting children. CBPP and FRAC, in coalition with numerous grantees from across the country, worked tirelessly to ensure that ARRA expanded benefits and provided \$20 billion in funding for SNAP/food stamps benefits and that states also had enough financing to administer the expanding program, with \$300 million in federal funding allocated to states for food stamp administration. One key argument was that many economists believe food stamp spending is, dollar-for-dollar, the single best form of economic stimulus.^{xxiii}

In addition to this significant role in food stamp policy—by far the largest nutrition program addressing child nutrition and well-being—funder investments have also played a role in several other key federal nutrition policies.

For example, grantees have been instrumental in improving access to and boosting participation in school meal, child care food, and afterschool and summer food programs. Advocates’ multiyear school breakfast campaign has helped increase the number of low-income children eating breakfast at school on an average school day from 4 million in 1990 to 10.1 million currently.^{xxiv} FRAC also recently succeeded in making a change to national policy with bipartisan support that reduces red tape and increases reimbursement rates for nonprofits and schools running summer food programs—steps that should boost participation, since, in July 2009, states reached only 16.1 low-income children for every 100 who received school lunch during the regular school year.^{xxv}

In addition, through the 2010 appropriations process, a set of national and state partners have been successful in adding Connecticut, Nevada, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia to the list of 10 other states with federal funding for suppers served in afterschool programs. In the remaining states, afterschool programs generally are not reimbursed for providing such a meal to low-income children in their care, but reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act may address that.

Significant progress has also been made in expanding WIC. Efforts by grantees across numerous foundations have helped to maintain a remarkable bipartisan tenor on the WIC program. To that end, though WIC is technically a discretionary program, it is treated in Congress much like an entitlement, with appropriations that have grown to ensure that the program can serve almost all eligible participants who apply.

Advancements in addressing childhood obesity have also been important. In addition to pushing for many of the recommendations coming out of the first lady's new initiative, grantees have long been raising awareness of the childhood obesity crisis. Beginning with a 2003 report by FRAC and the Center for Hunger and Poverty called "The Paradox of Hunger and Obesity," advocates published materials and held numerous briefings to show that obesity among low-income families was connected to inadequate resources for healthy food, rather than (as some tried to claim) overly generous federal programs. The spring 2006 issue of the quarterly journal, *The Future of Children*, published by Brookings and Princeton University, was devoted entirely to the challenge of childhood obesity. Moreover, GCYF's 2010 summer issue of *Insight*^{xxvi} is also devoted to this important topic. As a result of this work, advocates were successfully in improving the WIC food package, with more whole grains and more fruits and vegetables, and targeting a fresh fruit and vegetable program to schools with large numbers of low-income children.

Finally, through the range of investments across numerous foundations, the philanthropic community has been able to invest in a chorus of grantees who have helped to shift the debate on food stamps and other nutrition programs. Specifically, they have worked over the past several years to de-link the programs from welfare and remove the stigma of food stamp receipt. Much of this work was done, as Jason DeParle's article notes, in concert with the Bush administration, which worked to support "nutritional aid" rather than welfare.

State and Local Results

Key investments in state-level grantees and their policy influence have also had significant impacts on childhood hunger and nutrition. For example, Texas' Center for Public Policy Priorities has worked extensively on food and nutrition issues. For more than a decade, they have been working to secure increased access to WIC by expanding clinic hours, establishing a mandate that requires low-income school districts to offer breakfast and summer food programs, adding a line item in the state budget for food programs outreach, and ensuring that Texans had increased access to food stamps by revising the state's asset limits. They also secured funding to support food bank efforts to provide fresh produce to hungry families.

Similarly, partners at the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families and at Kansas Action have had significant influence on federal nutrition policies because of their access to key federal policymakers. Both organizations advocate for strong child nutrition legislation, testify on upcoming legislation, and coordinate advocacy efforts within their states.

National partners are also working with state groups across the country in addressing hunger and nutrition issues. Several states, for example, have launched state-level hunger campaigns, including work in Vermont, Washington State, and a newly formed effort in Colorado. In other states, advocates have been involved in suing the state to ensure that the state processes food stamp applications in a timely manner. Finally, in some states such as California and New Hampshire, grantees are working on specific childhood obesity efforts.

Still other grantees, namely emergency food providers through Feeding America and the network of food banks and food pantries across the country, play a key supportive role in shaping federal, state, and local policies on hunger and nutrition. For example, food banks have been active across the country as strong advocates for state-level efforts to ease access to SNAP benefits as well as serving as summer food providers. Often, these organizations act as the ground troops needed to mobilize action when there is a legislative initiative addressing hunger issues, providing an infrastructure to feed thousands of low-income individuals along with strong and knowledgeable advocates on behalf of those living with food insecurity.

These are just some of the examples of how philanthropic investments in state-based advocacy and research infrastructure have played a role in child nutrition and hunger issues, on the federal, state, and local stages. And though these specific examples of food and nutrition work are important, the beauty of this network of leaders is that these efforts are layered onto their existing work on a host of other income supports, tax policies, and benefit programs that help stabilize family income and address the family economic issues that are a linchpin to truly ending childhood hunger.

EMERGING POLICY OPPORTUNITIES IN 2010 AND 2011

While our grantmaking track record on child food and nutrition is strong, there is still a great deal to be done. In the next few years, funders have a significant opportunity to utilize this advocacy infrastructure and build off the work we have already accomplished, as well as to help end childhood hunger by 2015. Again, there are a host of policies that provide essential income supports for families that must expand if we are truly going to eradicate childhood hunger. However, we want to highlight some of the key policies—most of which address nutrition and hunger directly—as possible areas of focus.

Looking just at the next 18 months, there are three top priority influence opportunities—and challenges—for child hunger and nutrition:

1. Reauthorize the Child Nutrition Act.
2. Continue the major anti-hunger and poverty-reduction provisions of the 2009 stimulus bill, ARRA, many of which will expire in 2010 or 2011 unless continued by Congress.
3. Support and pass FY 2011 appropriation efforts that would help address hunger and nutrition for our nation's children.

Child Nutrition Act

The Administration has proposed investing \$1 billion per year above baseline to improve Child Nutrition Act entitlement programs—\$10 billion over the next 10 years. They are focused on using the reauthorization to improve benefit access and meal quality. A summary of polling data on hunger issues by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., and McLaughlin & Associates published in late 2008 shows strong public support for hunger and nutrition programs across the board and most support increased government spending on these important programs.^{xxvii} A more recent poll commissioned by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation confirmed that

“Whether it is fighting hunger, improving nutrition and reducing obesity, ensuring food safety, or providing schools with the necessary equipment to serve healthy meals, Americans strongly believe in sufficiently funding the programs that ensure these priorities.”^{xxviii}

So, funders should work to advance the access provisions within the legislation, policies that promote incentives for local and regional food production and processing, and increased availability of healthier and affordable food for kids at home, day care, and school settings.

The reauthorization bill recently reported by the Senate Agriculture Committee (the committee chair is Blanche Lincoln (D-AR)), though not delivering on all of our collective goals, does provide a good foundation for a bill, increasing funding by \$4.5 billion over 10 years. Senator Lincoln is pushing party leaders to take the bill up and is optimistic that the reauthorization bill will come to the floor before the programs expire at the end of September. The bill introduced by House Education and Labor Committee Chair George Miller (D-CA) goes a good deal further, investing an additional \$8 billion over 10 years. Both bills, among their many provisions, raise reimbursement for school lunch in an effort to improve the healthfulness of school meals. This bill was recently passed out of the House Education and Labor Committee and waits for full consideration by the House. Both bills have provisions to improve the quality of meals in child care settings. Both give USDA authority to regulate junk foods and other so-called “competitive foods” sold in schools in competition with the federal school meals programs. Both improve direct certification processes. The Senate bill expands access to afterschool suppers. The House bill expands access to summer food and school breakfast and has additional access gains.

Continuation of ARRA Expansions

Just as important as the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act is continuation of the key benefits and supports enacted under ARRA. As noted above, ARRA increased food stamp benefits by some \$20 billion—\$40 per household per month—and improved other nutrition programs. ARRA also increased the refundable child tax credit, enacted a \$400 worker tax credit, and improved the EITC. It funded major improvements and modernization of the states’ unemployment insurance programs, and it established a \$5 billion TANF Emergency Contingency Fund. It extended COBRA health insurance coverage for families losing their jobs, and it provided states with more than \$80 billion in fiscal relief. Almost all of these hunger and poverty reduction provisions will expire in 2010 or 2011 (or, in the case of the SNAP/food stamp benefit increase, when food price inflation eats up the increase) unless continued by Congress as part of a proposed jobs bill or some other legislation. Our key policy reform and advocacy grantees are already deeply engaged in discussions with the administration and Congress on these issues.

FY 2011 Budget Initiatives

In addition to the president’s 2011 budget initiatives such as \$10 billion over 10 years for the Child Nutrition Act, unprecedented levels of research investment to explore issues related to hunger and nutrition, and increased spending on the WIC program, there is another important policy proposal being supported by the administration. Called the “Healthy Food Financing Initiative”, this effort would establish a partnership between the U.S. Departments of Treasury, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services to support the development of food

establishments—including full-service grocery stores and farmers markets in areas identified as food deserts. This follows up on important foundation-funded food desert work that has occurred or is occurring in Pennsylvania, Chicago, the District of Columbia, and other venues. The budget calls for \$400 million a year and sets a goal of eliminating food deserts across the country within seven years.

NEXT STEPS FOR PHILANTHROPY

Philanthropy has the opportunity to **fund advocacy efforts** on national, state, and local food program policy change and outreach. Grantees can be instrumental in moving state funding discussions forward, as well as efforts to begin local- and state-level anti-hunger initiatives and campaigns. Supporting state and local actors as well as national technical assistance providers can move this agenda forward. By using existing national coalitions as well as GIST and GCYF networks such as KIDS COUNT, the Voices for America’s Children network, FRAC affiliates, the State Fiscal Analysis Initiative grantees, and others, we also can ensure that a strong, bipartisan echo chamber exists in Congress and within the administration for successful reauthorizations, as well as strong support through appropriations and budgetary policies for these vital programs.

Funders must also redouble efforts during this downturn in **supporting and improving the local emergency food and nutrition systems and infrastructure**. Foundations need to ensure that critical front-line food bank and food pantry providers and experienced advocacy voices can deliver services and also bear witness to the effects of the recession in their communities. Funding these service networks as well as bringing state resources to local policy efforts to improve school food quality, help expand access to quality food, and spur locally led anti-hunger efforts will remain a vital part of ensuring that we accomplish the goal of ending childhood hunger in the next five years.

Additionally, we know that for families struggling with hunger issues, we must wraparound several supports to stabilize the family and help them back onto a path of self-sufficiency. Better outreach, eligibility, enrollment, and recertification policies will help reach more families in need, ease access, and help clients maintain benefits and avoid unnecessary benefit terminations. To that end, there are several steps foundations can take to help ensure that the full package of supports (including, but not limited to, food benefits) are fully accessed by those who qualify for these benefits. Consequently, in 2010 and 2011, foundations such as Ford, Annie E. Casey, and Open Society Institute, among others, are hoping to undertake an aligned **benefits access and maximization initiative**, investing in models that help low-income families navigate and access the state social safety net systems as well as efforts to help states simplify, streamline, and synchronize the underlying policies, rules, and regulations of the programs to make it easier for families to utilize the benefits and supports for which they are eligible. This collaborative effort will also anchor a broader learning community among funders who are investing in benefits access efforts. National foundations as well as more local funders can invest in opportunities to help better integrate service delivery within communities, and by

contributing to this learning community, funders can also help to inform and advance national efforts to improve the nation's safety net.

Finally, we need to continue to **leverage our investments** by working in partnership with other funders to make sure that our grantmaking is coordinated and that strategies are linked and synergistic. Specifically, we hope that GIST and GCYF members, along with other funders, join the effort led by Arabella Advisors, a philanthropic services firm in Washington, DC to coordinate investments around the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act.^{xxix} We also hope that in the coming months, funders can unite efforts to advance food stamp funding and efforts to ensure that participants have access to the benefits they need in this economic downturn.

We need, in short, to be more strategic, more deliberate, and more ambitious in our collective work together on child hunger issues. If we are, then we will be able to capitalize upon the smart federal hunger policies and accomplishments of recent years, and make 2010 and 2011 milestone years in accomplishing the goal of ending child hunger by 2015.

This paper was prepared by Michael Laracy, Director, Policy Reform and Advocacy and Shelley Waters Boots, Senior Consultant, with the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The report was prepared on behalf of Grantmakers Income Security Taskforce and Grantmakers for Children, Youth & Families.

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ENDNOTES

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^{xxviii} Presentation by Jim Gerstein at the Grantmakers Income Security Taskforce and Grantmakers for Children, Youth & Families' Budget and Tax Briefing. Washington, D.C.: February 26, 2010. Note: Gerstein Agne Strategic Communications conducted a national survey of 1001 American adults January 28 through February 1, 2010. The survey included 850 interviews on landline telephones and 151 interviews on cell phones, and has a margin of error of +/-3.1 percent.

^{xxix} For more information on Child Nutrition Act reauthorization sponsored by Arabella and its partners, see www.schoolmealsmatter.org. We also recommend a funder's issue brief on child nutrition written by Arabella Advisors and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation available at: www.arabellaadvisors.com/images/IB_files/ChildNutrition.pdf.