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Bonamici, Molinaro Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Reduce Childhood Hunger

WASHINGTON, DC [10/26/23] – Today Representatives Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) and Marcus Molinaro (R-NY) introduced bipartisan legislation to increase access to healthy meals and snacks for children in care settings.

The Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act updates the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to allow an additional meal or snack for children in care for a full day, and streamlines the program to make it easier for early learning programs and child care providers to participate. CACFP currently serves 4.2 million low-income children in child care centers, Head Start and afterschool programs, homeless shelters, and other settings. Affordable child care and access to nutritious meals contribute to the health and economic vitality of working families.

“Child care providers play an essential role in the fight against hunger,” **said Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici.** “Updating and expanding CACFP will allow this effective program to reach more children, reduce food insecurity, and lower the cost of care. This bipartisan legislation is especially important as many providers struggle to keep their doors open amid rising costs. Child care is economic infrastructure, and removing unnecessary paperwork and boosting resources for child care businesses will help families afford the care and

education their young children need. I'm grateful to partner with Rep. Molinaro to provide more children with a healthy start to life."

"To fight childhood hunger and combat our nation's childcare crisis, we are expanding the Child and Adult Care Food Program to adequately feed children in care facilities and make it easier for more providers to participate in the program," **said Congressman Marcus Molinaro**. "As a member of the Pre-K and Child Care Caucus, I am proud to lead this bipartisan effort with Rep. Suzanne Bonamici to ensure our nation's children don't have to worry about where their next meal is coming from."

The legislation is endorsed by: American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), American Heart Association, Bipartisan Policy Center, CACFP Roundtable, Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Child Care Aware of America, Children's Institute, Early Care and Education Consortium (ECEC), Feeding America, First Children's Finance, First Five Years Fund, First Focus Campaign for Children, Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), Home Grown, Independent Restaurant Coalition, KidKare by Minute Menu, KinderCare, National Association for Family Child Care, National CACFP Sponsors Association, National Child Care Association, National Head Start Association, National Women's Law Center, Oregon Food Bank, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), YMCA of the USA, and ZERO TO THREE.

"Across the country, we continue to face an unprecedented shortage of child care workers, which will only worsen if providers don't receive critical federal investment," **said to Lee Saunders, President of AFSCME**. "Parents today are working longer hours and depend on child care providers to meet essential needs, including proper nutrition, which is expensive. The bipartisan Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act would alleviate this crisis by ensuring providers can afford to serve nutritious meals all day, including suppers. We applaud Representatives Suzanne Bonamici and Marcus Molinaro for leading on this issue and introducing this crucial bill."

"A quality meal is essential to the well-being and development of children, and like child care providers throughout the country, YMCAs are working to ensure every child in our care has regular access to nutritious meals and snacks," **said Suzanne McCormick, President and CEO of YMCA of the USA**. "We are grateful to Representatives Bonamici and Molinaro for their proposal, which would cut red tape and allow a third meal for children who are in our care all day. This bill would improve the CACFP program and enable more providers to participate, giving more children access to the nutrition they need to thrive."

Participation in CACFP provides essential nutrition guidance and significant support for quality child and adult care programs, a sector in which workers are underpaid and overworked. Unfortunately, many providers have struggled with overly burdensome requirements to participate in CACFP. Nationally, these outdated policies and the increased cost of food are cutting into the funds child care providers need to stay open and offer quality care.

A summary of the bill can be found [here](#), and the bill text is available [here](#). Additional statements of support from the National CACFP Sponsors Association, Home Grown, and Bipartisan Policy Center's Early Childhood Initiative can be found [here](#).

In addition to Bonamici and Molinaro, the Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act is cosponsored by Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Mike Lawler (R-NY), and Henry Cuellar (D-TX).

Bonamici is Ranking Member of the Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee that has jurisdiction over the federal child nutrition programs. She is also Co-Chair of the bipartisan Pre-K and Child Care [Caucus](#), where she is a leading voice to secure investments in child care that are fundamental for children, families, and the economy. Additionally, Bonamici and Congressman Greg Landsman are leading the Child Care [Nutrition Enhancement Act](#), which would further enhance CACFP by increasing reimbursement levels nationally and put family child care providers on equal footing with center-based providers.

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