WHEREAS, Regular access to healthy and affordable meals has been proven to be one of the strongest means of improved school performance, improved health, and sound childhood development; and

WHEREAS, According to 2020 census data, Black households reported food insecurity rates that were more than twice as high as white households; and

WHEREAS, Research shows that childhood hunger and food insecurity have a range of negative impacts on the health, academic performance, and overall well-being of children; and

WHEREAS, Research suggests that older Black students may be more likely to skip meals during the week than white students; and

WHEREAS, School nutrition programs offer the opportunity to provide healthy food and improve dietary quality for students who may otherwise not eat; and

WHEREAS, School meals can also have a positive impact on grades, absences, and tardiness among students; and
WHEREAS, Students from Black families are more likely to receive free or reduced-price lunches during the school year, and research shows students who receive these meals during the school year are more likely to face food insufficiency in the summer; and

WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic led to a dramatic spike in the rate of children experiencing hunger and food insecurity, peaking at 18% of families with children reporting their household did not have enough to eat in December 2020 according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and also created challenges to safely accessing child nutrition programs; and

WHEREAS, Substantial racial and ethnic disparities in food insecurity exist among parents of school-age children, and Black families experienced significant hardship as a result of the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Approximately four in 10 families with parents who are Black (40.8%) reported food insecurity in the prior 30 days, almost triple the rate of families with white parents (15.1%); and

WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an ongoing increase in the scope and scale of children experiencing


1. hunger and food insecurity, with the most recent estimates from Feeding America showing that 13 million may face hunger in 2021 compared with the all-time low of 11 million in 2019, according to USDA; and

WHEREAS, Non-congregate meal delivery options were especially critical in distributing meals to children in rural and hard to reach communities or where transportation challenges make it difficult for programs to distribute meals at a localized site; and

WHEREAS, Child nutrition programs are the front line of defense against childhood hunger and food insecurity, promoting healthy eating and providing healthy, nutritious food for the nation's children through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Summer EBT for Children (SEBTC), Pandemic-EBT, the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and

WHEREAS, The SEBTC Program reaches children who most need additional food support over summer and school breaks and is proven to reduce food insecurity among children; and

WHEREAS, P-EBT, a temporary program providing a grocery benefit to children who have lost access to free and reduced


priced meals at school due to COVID-19, has been highly effective at reducing food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, The CEP program promotes equity and reduces stigma for families and has been proven to reduce hunger and improve student outcomes; and

WHEREAS, A proven barrier to continued participation in the WIC Program is unavailability of remote appointments, short certification periods, and lack of flexibility in food purchasing, ordering, and delivery; and

WHEREAS, Millions of children benefit from these programs, including the 21.5 million low-income children who participated in the school lunch program and the 12.4 million who participated in the school breakfast program in the 2018-2019 school year, as well as the 6.3 million mothers and children who received food and nutrition education through WIC and 2.8 million children who ate summer meals in 2019; and

WHEREAS, The Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 has improved the nutritional standards for school nutrition programs, and as a result, kids have access to increased fruits, vegetables, and whole grains but less sugars, fats, and sodium; Congress has the opportunity to ensure that children continue to have access to nutritious and quality
meals to help prevent childhood hunger and obesity; and

WHEREAS, Congress has an opportunity to improve and strengthen access to nutrition through the 2021 Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) bill by making permanent the COVID-19 waiver flexibilities that help to better reach children and by including provisions that would increase access and reach more kids through streamlining, reducing administrative burdens, and providing program flexibility, giving them the access to quality meals that they have during the school year; and

WHEREAS, An adequately funded and evidence-based reauthorization bill can reduce childhood hunger and food insecurity in America, help reduce childhood obesity, improve child nutrition and health, and enhance healthy child development and school readiness, allowing children to reach their full potential; and

WHEREAS, Congress has a unique opportunity in the upcoming reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act to improve and promote equitable access and nutrition for millions of children, particularly low-income children; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
we urge Congress to protect, strengthen, and improve the child
nutrition programs through a Child Nutrition and WIC
Reauthorization Act that builds on the Healthy, Hunger Free
Kids Act of 2010 to ensure that low-income children continue
to have access to nutritious meals throughout the year; and be
it further

RESOLVED, That we urge Congress to streamline and simplify
provisions governing the summer meals program in order to
reduce administrative burdens, bureaucracies, and duplications
in program administration and operation during the
reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge Congress to allow for more
flexibility around where children are able to access and eat
summer meals, by allowing for non-congregate models in
communities where summer meals sites are not available and by
lowering the threshold required to operate sites open to all
children; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge Congress to permanently authorize
the operation of the SEBTC program, make program funding
mandatory, and expand the reach of the program to kids
eligible for free or reduced-price school meals in all states,
tribal nations, and localities in order to close the summer
meals gap; and be it further
RESOLVED, That we urge Congress to permanently authorize the PEBT system beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing authorities to quickly deliver increased nutritional aid during times of crisis; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge Congress to expand the well-documented benefits of CEP, which allows schools to serve meals at no charge to all students if enough are identified as qualifying for other assistance programs, by lowering the minimum identified student percentage (ISP), by increasing the ISP multiplier, by expanding direct certification with Medicaid data nationwide, and by supporting the improvement of direct certification systems; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge Congress to increase the flexibility of WIC appointments through increased access to remote appointments and extended certification periods as well as to support equitable access to the WIC food package through modernization efforts that increase access to online ordering, online purchasing, and delivery; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we support the enactment of a Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act that ensures low-income children's improved and equitable access to and participation in the child nutrition programs and includes the policy goals
stated above; and be it further

RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be delivered to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, and other federal and state government officials and agencies as appropriate.