



September 6, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chair  
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member  
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee  
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray,

The undersigned national, state, and local organizations respectfully ask the House Education and Labor Committee to pass the **Summer Meals and Learning Act of 2019 (S. 2070)** and move it to consideration by the full Senate.

Modeled after the successful Oregon Summer Learning, Library, Lunch (SL3) program, this legislation will create a new Federal grant program to allow schools that already serve free summer meals to keep their libraries open for student use during the summer months, in collaboration with public library systems.

This bill would:

- Provide grants to state libraries to fund summer reading programs at schools that 1) have a summer lunch program and 2) where at least 50% of students read below grade level or are at risk of reading below grade levels;
- Enable state library programs to award sub-grants based on the proposed number of school lunch sites and the number of students that will be served under the summer early reading program;
- Be authorized at \$5 million in funding over five years.

The phenomenon of summer learning loss is well known. We also know that low-income students are least likely to have access to key resources that keep them safe, healthy, and learning over the summer months. Despite the fact that summer has been identified as a major factor in the achievement gap in America's schools, there is still no dedicated source of funding for summer learning.

Unfortunately, school resources like libraries and cafeterias are often idle in the summer months. This bill would activate these resources in communities where they are most needed. The inclusion of state libraries as partners is key to this program's success. To be effective, summer reading programs need to have structure and guidance. Research shows that the A-B-C's of effective reading instruction are:

- Access to books;
- Books that match readers' ability levels and interests; and
- Comprehension, as monitored and guided by an adult who can ask questions and guide kids to better understand what they read.



Sadly, for many kids, summer equals hunger. Good summer programs provide students with access to nutritious meals, which millions of children in the U.S. need. In July 2017, the Summer Nutrition Programs reached only one in seven children who ate a free or reduced-price school lunch during the 2016-2017 school year. A 2018 report from the GAO shows that much work is needed to ensure youth are participating in the Summer Nutrition Programs. This bill is one step in that effort.

Targeted federal support goes a long way toward helping states and local communities leverage their existing resources to maintain support for the most vulnerable students during the summer months. Programs that bring together natural partners like schools and libraries and include the critical summer meals component help communities efficiently use resources and ensure that youth who are most at risk have access to summer supports that help them thrive year-round.

Summer opportunity gaps are a problem we can solve. We ask the committee to pass the Summer Meals and Learning Act and help communities bring targeted, effective literacy and nutrition programming to schools and students most in need. Should you have questions or thoughts, please direct them to: Rachel Gwaltney, VP of Policy & Research, National Summer Learning Association, 410-856-1370 or [rgwaltney@summerlearning.org](mailto:rgwaltney@summerlearning.org). We look forward to your continued support for summer!

Sincerely,

National Summer Learning Association and Partners

**National Organizations**

Afterschool Alliance  
American Library Association  
BellXcel  
EveryLibrary  
Girls Inc.  
HealthCorps  
NAACP  
National AfterSchool Association  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Secondary School Principals  
National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)  
SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators  
The Learning Agenda  
United Way Suncoast

**State Organizations**

ACT Now  
Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence  
Boys & Girls Clubs in Indiana Inc.  
Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network  
Idaho Out-of-School Network  
Indiana Afterschool Network



Indiana Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs  
Indiana United Ways  
Iowa Afterschool Alliance  
Kansas Enrichment Network  
Maryland Out of School Time Network  
Missouri AfterSchool Network  
Montana Afterschool Alliance  
New Mexico Out of School Time Network  
New York State Network for Youth Success  
School's Out Washington  
TN Afterschool Network  
TXPOST  
United Ways of Tennessee  
Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time (VPOST)

**Local Organizations**

From Cradle to College Foundation, Palmetto, FL  
Oak Park Education Foundation, Oak Park, IL  
Safe Harbor, Michigan City  
The Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County, Palmetto Florida  
United Way of North Central Florida, Gainesville, Florida