

Incorporated Into Child Nutrition Reauthorization Bill to Fight Childhood Obesity, Child Hunger

(Washington, D.C.) – The House of Representatives today passed, with the support of U.S. Representative Rush Holt (NJ-12) the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, legislation to strengthen school lunch programs that help combat child obesity and child hunger. The legislation, which now goes to the President for his signature, contains an initiative Holt wrote to provide \$5 million annually in funding for Farm to School programs. Farm to School programs bring locally or regionally grown fresh produce into schools, thereby significantly improving nutrition for children eating school lunches. Currently, 10,000 Farm to School programs exist, but there are 94,000 public and nonprofit private schools operating school lunch programs that could offer one.

“It should not be a surprise that as a representative from the Garden State I support bringing Jersey tomatoes or sweet corn into schools,” Holt said. “But I am not alone. Farm to school programs are a key priority for Agriculture Secretary Vilsack and First Lady Michelle Obama. Farm to School programs provide good nutrition, help in the fight against childhood obesity, and economically support our local farmers.”

Last month, the House passed Holt’s Resolution to establish October as National Farm to School Month. The New Jersey Farm to School Network applauded the passage of the bill and Holt’s provision.

“We can’t be penny wise and a pound foolish with this one. What we feed children will determine their health as adults--how well they learn and perform in all areas of their lives,” said Beth Feehan of the New Jersey Farm to School Network. “We must put the resources together to improve the nutrition of our youngest citizens, especially those most at risk. When our military states that they cannot command enough recruits due to the increase in obesity in the eligible population who can serve, it is time to take a serious look at what we are feeding children and make improvements now.”

Holt supported the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act to make improvements to child nutrition programs vital to fighting childhood obesity and childhood hunger.

“For millions of children, the only good meal they get is at school. This legislation increases the number of children enrolled in the school meals program, improves the nutritional quality of school meals, removes junk food from schools, and promotes nutrition and wellness for students.”

The bill would:

--Help schools provide healthier meals to students by increasing the lunch reimbursement rate by 6 cents per meal - the first increase in over 30 years.

--Significantly reduce the availability of high calorie junk foods and sugary beverages on school campuses.

--Ensure more than 100,000 additional eligible children can access school meals through direct certification.

--Ensure children in communities across the country can access healthy meals after school and in child care settings.

--Strengthen local wellness policies to help schools, communities and parents identify and implement strategies to make a real difference in helping children to develop healthy behaviors when they are away from home.

--Leverage public and private partnerships to reduce childhood hunger and obesity, and identifies successful community-wide strategies to improve child nutrition and well-being.

--Modernize the WIC program and enhancing efforts to encourage and support mothers who choose to breastfeed their infants.

More information can be found here:

<http://edlabor.house.gov/blog/2010/11/healthy-hunger-free-kids-act-o.shtml>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that as of 2008 almost 32 percent of our children were either overweight or obese. Obese children can develop adult diseases such as hypertension and Type-2 diabetes and, in the long term, these children are at increased

risk for heart disease, stroke, and cancer. A study by Mission:Readiness, an organization of retired senior military leaders, found that more than 9 million young adults are too overweight to join the Armed Services.

###