

Submitted online: Feb. 1, 2024

RE: LB952 (Day) – Require the Department of Health and Human Services to implement the federal Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer Program

SUPPORT

Dear Senator Hansen and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska recognizes that early intervention and prevention measures have proven effective in helping children reach their full potential. The LWVNE also supports policies and programs, based on need, which provide support for food, clothing and shelter.

LB952 is a bill that offers an additional way to address up to 150,000 children who depend on school nutrition programs in Nebraska, but who may not have access to either school, camps or meal centers in the summer where nutrition programs are available.

Through the USDA program, food for children is available through school breakfast and lunch programs. During the summer, eligible students may eat free or reduced lunch at summer school, or they may pick up to-go lunches at community centers.

This year the federal government is offering additional benefits available to parents through electronic transfer, \$40 per month, per child, over the months that school is not in session (1). This program can help children in poverty in states and on tribal reservations, making it especially helpful to parents who do not have transportation to community food distribution centers. Since the pandemic, the number of public sites for food distribution has declined, especially in rural areas.

Governor Pillen turned down \$18 million from the federal government to feed children, stating that he did not believe in welfare (2). However, the state readily accepted \$1.04 billion (3) in American Rescue Plan Act funds for businesses and employers and for recreation and development projects to help our state recover from the pandemic.

Accepting food support for children in poverty is not welfare; it is an investment in Nebraska's future and worth the \$300,000 (4) in administrative costs.

Even though Governor Pillen rejected the additional nutrition benefits for children, the USDA will waive the Dec. 31 application deadline (5). Please vote this bill out of committee knowing that feeding kids in poverty is not welfare; it is an investment in healthy, productive, capable adults who will live and work in our state for years to come.

Thank you,

Carol Dennison
LWVNE Social Policy Action Team

1. USDA. Summer Nutrition Programs. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/summer>
2. Governor Pillen reiterates state won't take S-EBT funds. (2023, December 29) <https://governor.nebraska.gov/press/gov-pillen-reiterates-state-won%E2%80%99t-take-s-ebt-funds>
3. Nebraska Department of Economic Development. (2022, July 26). ARPA funding update. <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/nebraska-department-of-economic-development-ded-american-rescue-plan-act-arpa-funding-update/>
4. Hammel, P. (2023, December 29). Advocates issue final plea to governor to participate in new, summer lunch program. Nebraska Examiner. <https://nebraskaexaminer.com/2023/12/29/advocates-issue-final-plea-to-governor-to-participate-in-new-summer-lunch-program/>
5. Van Fleet, D. (2024, January 30) NE bill would ensure summer EBT participation: first hearing Thursday. Public News Service. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/ne-bill-would-ensure-summer-ebt-participation-first-hearing-thursday/ar-BB1htBOG>