

Child Nutrition Reauthorization Listening Session
June 10, 2008
Boston, MA

Testimony of
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My name is Brett Mashteare. I am 20 years old and live in Burlington VT. I go to CCV (Community College of Vermont) and work for the city of Burlington through Parks and Recreation. I do the fundraising for the summer Recreation and Nutrition programs as well as staff at the Riverside program.

The Riverside program was originally the Roosevelt program that I attended as a kid. I remember the very first day the program started; I was at home (across the street) and I saw a person in a staff shirt over there by himself. I walked over and asked what he was doing and he told me about the program and I began helping him start the program (flyering).

The program was a place to have fun and eat food. Over the years it was a different person running the program each year and each year I was over there helping the new person by telling them what we did the previous year that worked and what didn't.

After I out grew this program I began volunteering there and then I was asked to be an employee there. As an employee I can tell you right now that the kids need these programs. At the Roosevelt program as well as the other summer nutrition programs the hours are from 11am – 2 pm, lunch is always at 11:30 and many of the kids are there at 10.

Most of the kids like to say that they come for the activities because they have fun but usually the first question I hear from the kids is “when is lunch” or “what is for lunch”. To me, that stands out in my mind. It means that kids are not here for the activities but they are here really for the food.

Like these kids, this program was a great thing to me in so many ways; however I didn't realize it until I was older.

Growing up in a poor family and wondering when you're going to eat next or how long until you gets some food is a horrible feeling. This program and more specifically the USDA allows for kids not to go through what I did by providing free breakfast at school, free or reduced lunch at school and free lunch in the summer time. I only wish it these programs were around when I was in need.

You have the power to make or break a kid's life. I am here on behalf of Vermont because we need more of these programs in Burlington but also in Vermont. I am not here to talk politics. I am here to ask you to change 2 rules so that we don't leave out these kids that are in need.

One rule that needs to be changed is the food reimbursement amount. If you don't provide enough money to reimburse the food then in turn you are lowering the quality of the food. This is supposed to be a federal funded nutrition program but yet we are serving white bread with American cheese as a lunch. To have better quality food we must be able to spend more money and in turn be reimbursed for it.

The second rule is the eligibility guidelines for an open site are too strict. We are lucky that in my neighborhood more than 50% of the people are "low income" because we would have a lot of hungry kids. In our program we don't have to have people provide proof of low income but in most places they do. And the people that are low income and need help are more likely not to ask for it because they have to prove that they are low income.

I am not asking you to feed every hungry kid in America. I'm just asking you to start by changing these two rules.