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CHILD NUTRITION

IMPACT OF THE PRESIDENT'S FY 2012 BUDGET REQUEST ON CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

On February 14, President Obama presented his \$3.7 trillion FY 2012 budget request to Congress, outlining his spending priorities for the coming year. As expected, the budget reflects the serious economic challenges posed by the federal budget deficit, and proposes to trim or terminate more than 200 federal programs through a budget freeze on non-security discretionary spending for the next five years. Consistent with this theme, the budget includes a host of freezes and cuts across all non-security, discretionary federal programs.

The President proposed \$121 billion dollars in mandatory funding and \$24 billion dollars in discretionary funding for a total budget authority of \$145 billion dollars for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This is a slight decrease in discretionary funds from the 2011 estimate of \$26 billion and the \$28 billion discretionary funding level in 2010 for the Department of Agriculture.

Although, the USDA's discretionary funds have seen a decrease in the President's FY2012 budget request, the nutrition safety net fared very well. With the President's budget freeze for non-security discretionary spending, the President had to make difficult decisions to cut programs. However, rather than impose an across the board freeze, the President's proposal increases funding in certain areas, such as nutrition assistance, while other programs are cut back. The office of Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) within the USDA is responsible for administering nutrition assistance programs. The President proposed \$112 billion in total budget authority for the Food and Nutrition Services department. Although this full budget authority does not go entirely to children, a significant portion of this money goes to child nutrition programs.

The President's 2012 budget for child nutrition programs provides funds for anticipated changes in participation and food cost inflation for the major nutrition programs. Through the FY2012 budget request the President continues to emphasize the importance of improving access to nutritious food for the children who need it the most.

The proposals in the President's FY 2012 budget that are most significant for child nutrition programs are below:

- The President's budget supports the implementation of the **Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act** of 2010 which will strengthen child nutrition programs such as the school breakfast and lunch programs. This funding will also increase children's access to healthy meals and snacks. Below are the proposed funding levels for the various programs:
 - The budget provides **the School Breakfast Program** with \$3.3 billion which is an increase of \$ 448 million over FY2010.
 - The President's budget proposes \$10.9 billion which is a \$1 billion dollar increase over FY2010 for **the School Lunch Program**.
 - The **Summer Food Service Program** is proposed to be funded at \$400 million dollars.
 - The **Fresh Fruits and Vegetable Program** is funded at \$130 million which is a 62.5% increase over FY 2010 funding levels.
 - The **Child and Adult Care Food Program** (CACFP) is proposed to be funded at \$2.8 billion, which is \$235 million dollars above FY2010.
 - The budget provides the **Hunger Free Community Grants** to be funded at \$5 million, which is the same level that was included in the President's FY2011 budget request and is the same amount that was enacted in FY2010.
 - The budget provides \$7.39 billion for the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children** (WIC). This is \$133 million more than was enacted in FY2010 and is enough to support caseloads of 9.6 million participants (low income pregnant women, new mothers, and children) and is slightly above current participation levels of 9 million participants.
 - The President's proposal funds two grant programs newly authorized in the child nutrition bill, including the **School Breakfast Expansion Grants**, which provide first-time funding of \$10 million to increase participation in school breakfast by helping schools improve or start a breakfast program, and **State Childhood Hunger Challenge Grants**, which provides first-time funding of \$25 million to encourage states to develop plans to end childhood hunger.
- Since it is an entitlement program, the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (SNAP) receives funding to serve all eligible participants. The President's budget proposes \$36.9 billion

dollars for SNAP benefits that go to children, this is a 7.45 billion (25.6%) increase over FY2010.

- The President's budget restores the **SNAP American Recovery Reinvestment Act benefit cut** that was used to partially pay for the 2010 Child Nutrition Reauthorization, extending the elevated benefit levels from ending on the current date of November 2013 back to March 2014.
- Provides \$35 million through the Office of the Secretary for the **Healthy Food Financing Initiative** (and a total of \$400 million to various Government agencies) to bring grocery stores and other healthy food retailers to underserved communities in rural and urban food deserts.

It's important to recognize that the President's budget represents only the Administration's wish list of priorities, providing a blueprint for Congress to consider as it begins the process of allocating federal dollars for spending on programs. Ultimately, Congress holds the reins on setting funding levels.

We realize that Congress has very difficult decisions to make with respect to spending cuts, but balancing the budget should not fall on the backs of our children. First Focus urges Congress to act swiftly to ensure that the needs of our children are met and that funding for child nutrition is a national priority.

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First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization that is committed to making children and families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions.

For more information about First Focus's Early Childhood Portfolio visit www.firstfocus.net, or contact Megan Curran, Sr. Director, Family Economics (MeganC@firstfocus.net).