

U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Rules  
Washington, D.C.

March 28, 2022

Dear Chairman McGovern, Ranking Member Cole, and distinguished members of the House Committee on Rules:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter and relevant research in support of the White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger, and Health. Our nearly 25 years of research at Children's HealthWatch strongly supports robust efforts to reduce food insecurity as a key mechanism for improving health beginning in the prenatal period and extending through adulthood. Children's HealthWatch is a network of pediatricians, public health researchers, and child health and policy experts committed to advancing health equity for young children and families by informing policies that alleviate economic hardships, including food insecurity.

Reducing food insecurity is a critical public health and health equity issue. Enclosed with this letter, I have provided multiple studies documenting the importance of reducing food insecurity for improving health outcomes and lowering avoidable health care and other costs among children and adults. I also include studies highlighting the interconnected nature of food insecurity to other hardships and the important role federal policies play in reducing food insecurity and promoting health. Below I summarize key findings from each study.

*Research on associations between food insecurity, health, and avoidable health care costs and drivers of food insecurity:*

- [Estimating the Health-Related Costs of Food Insecurity and Hunger](#): This report estimated the direct and indirect costs of food insecurity on health care expenditures, education costs, and lost work productivity to be \$178.93 billion in 2014. Direct and indirect costs associated with health-related expenditures was \$160.07 billion and education costs and lost work productivity costs was estimated at \$18.85 billion.
- [Association of Food Insecurity with Children's Behavioral, Emotional, and Academic Outcomes: A Systematic Review](#): This paper provides a critical summary of peer-reviewed articles documenting associations between food insecurity – even when experienced at marginal levels - and adverse childhood developmental behavioral outcomes including early development, school performance, inattention, externalizing behaviors, and depression among children.
- [Experiences of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination Are Associated with Food Insecurity and Poor Health](#): This study examined the associations of mothers' experiences of discrimination with household food insecurity, physical health, and depressive symptoms. Among a sample of mothers of young children in Philadelphia, experiences of discrimination in certain settings were associated with increased risk of household food insecurity, depressive symptoms, and adverse health outcomes.

- [Unstable Housing and Caregiver and Child Health in Renter Families](#): This study showed among a large sample of families with young children in 5 US cities, housing instability was associated with significantly increased risk of household and child food insecurity – along with other adverse health outcomes among children and caregivers.
- [A Brief Indicator of Household Energy Security: Associations With Food Security, Child Health, and Child Development in US Infants and Toddlers](#): This study found families with young children who were unable to afford home energy expenses, which resulted in threatened or actual shut offs, days without heating or cooling, and/or using a cooking stove for heat – a condition known as energy insecurity – were at increased risk of household and child food insecurity as well as poor health outcomes compared to families without energy insecurity.

*Research linking federal nutrition assistance programs and reductions in food insecurity among families with young children*

- [SNAP: Building a Healthy Foundation Today and Tomorrow](#): This policy report summarizes decades of research from Children’s HealthWatch and others documenting the impact of SNAP in reducing food insecurity, improving health, reducing health care costs, and supporting educational outcomes.
- [SNAP, Young Children’s Health, and Family Food Security and Healthcare Access](#): This study examined associations between SNAP participation and young children’s health and development, caregiver health, and family economic hardships. Among a large sample of families with young children in 5 US cities, participation in SNAP was associated with reduced household and child food insecurity, lower odds of developmental risk as well as poor health and growth among infants and toddlers, and reduced health care hardships.
- [Loss of SNAP Is Associated with Food Insecurity and Poor Health in Working Families with Young Children](#): This paper investigated how SNAP benefit reductions or cutoffs resulting from increased income were related to economic hardships and caregiver and child health outcomes. Analyses among a large sample of families with young children in 5 US cities showed families whose SNAP benefits were reduced or cut off had significantly increased odds of household and child food insecurity and were at greater risk of fair/poor child and caregiver health compared to those with consistent SNAP participation.
- [Prenatal WIC is Associated with Increased Birthweight of Infants Born in the United States with Immigrant Mothers](#): This study examined relationships between prenatal participation in WIC and birth weight – a key indicator of positive health in early childhood - among infants of income-eligible immigrant mothers. Among a multisite sample of mothers with low-incomes, prenatal WIC participation for income-eligible immigrant mothers was associated with healthier birth weights among infants born in the United States.

*Research linking federal non-nutrition assistance programs to reductions in food insecurity among families with children*

- [Association of the Implementation of Child Tax Credit Advance Payments With Food Insecurity in US Households](#): Using data from the Household Pulse Survey conducted by the US Census Bureau in 2021, this study found receipt of advance Child Tax Credit monthly

payments were associated with a 26 percent reduction in food insufficiency among families with children.

- [Bulwark Against the Storm: The unequal impact of COVID relief policies on families with young children](#): This report used longitudinal data among families with young children collected by Children's HealthWatch before and during the pandemic. Household and child food insecurity rates and rates of being behind on rent increased for all families during the pandemic, but families with immigrant mothers were at greater risk of household food insecurity and being behind on rent than families with US-born mothers. Economic Impact Payments were significantly associated with reductions in food insecurity among all families, but families with immigrant mothers were more likely to report missing out on payments than families with US-born mothers.

Thank you for your consideration of these materials. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the Director of Policy Strategy, Allison Bovell-Ammon ([Allison.bovell-ammon@bmc.org](mailto:Allison.bovell-ammon@bmc.org)) if you have any questions or would like to request further information. We appreciate your commitment to reducing food insecurity and improving health in the United States.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, PhD, MPH  
Executive Director  
Children's HealthWatch