



June 14, 2020

Hon. Suzanne Bonamici, Chair
Civil Rights and Human Services Subcommittee
House Committee on Education & Labor
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Russ Fulcher, Ranking Member
Civil Rights and Human Services Subcommittee
House Committee on Education & Labor
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Bonamici and Ranking Member Fulcher,

On behalf of Mission: Readiness, an organization of nearly 800 retired admirals and generals, I write to thank the Civil Rights and Human Services Subcommittee for recently convening *Ending Child Hunger: Priorities for Child Nutrition Reauthorization*.

America's federal child nutrition programs are deeply rooted in efforts to strengthen national security. During the early half of the 20th century, malnutrition emerged as an urgent national concern. The Great Depression had created staggering unemployment rates, leaving many without the means to purchase food and dependent on public assistance. At the same time, as many as forty percent of those drafted during World War II were rejected for reasons related to malnutrition.

Testimony by the head of the Selective Service detailing this growing threat to military readiness was the driving force behind congressional action to create the National School Lunch Program in 1946. The final legislation passed by Congress included a policy statement declaring that the program was established "as a measure of national security." Despite tremendous progress over the years, poor diet still poses a dire threat to our national security: one-third of adults between the ages of 17 and 24 today could not qualify for military service due to excess weight alone.

Nutrition security remains vital to America's national security. Mission: Readiness members strongly believe that federal nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program, play a critical role in ensuring children have access to fresh and nutritious food.

Enclosed, please find the Mission: Readiness *Nutrition Roadmap*, which details the items that we believe must be included in any Child Nutrition Reauthorization. We hope that you will consider our organization as a resource as you work to advance efforts to improve child nutrition.

Very respectfully,

Ben Goodman
National Director, Mission: Readiness