

**Testimony of
Alexandra M. Ashbrook, Director, D.C. Hunger Solutions
D.C. Charter School Board
Oversight Hearing**

**Council of the District of Columbia
Council Chambers
John A. Wilson Building
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We already ask so much of our schools but as more families struggle, we must ask our schools to do even more so that all low-income children can access healthy food at least 180 days a year.

Fortunately, the federal nutrition programs - School Breakfast, Lunch and Snack, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (which pays for food in Head Start and other child care settings), and the D.C. Free Summer Meals Program—provide schools with the resources to protect children against hunger.

In these trying times, schools must expand participation in these nutrition programs. The good news is that there is an unlimited source of federal funding to pay for many of the costs of each meal served at a school. These nutrition programs not only reduce hunger, but have a range of positive outcomes that fit any school's agenda. The programs:

- boost child development
- improve school achievement and student behavior
- reduce obesity
- boost family incomes

- stimulate local economic growth
- improve the quality of child care and afterschool programs.

As charter schools grow to provide a quality education to more District children, schools should also grow their federal nutrition programs by:

- drawing in all available federal funding to serve meals at school
- pledging that all charter schools will offer breakfast free of charge
- adopting the Friendship Edison and SAIL Charter School model of providing breakfast in the classroom (see attachment for more details)
- promoting the new federal Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program at elementary schools
- using federal stimulus funding for school meal equipment improvements to benefit low-income students

For cash-strapped families trying to make ends meet, the school meal programs are a lifeline. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Submitted by:

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