

Testimony of
Katie Vinopal
Nutrition Associate, D.C. Hunger Solutions
Agency Performance Oversight Hearing on Fiscal Year 2009-2010 Budget
Office of the State Superintendent of Education
Committee of the Whole
Council of the District of Columbia
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1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Room 412
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Chairman Gray and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony today about the Afterschool Supper program in the District. My name is Katie Vinopal and I am a nutrition associate at D.C. Hunger Solutions, an initiative of the Food Research and Action Center. D.C. Hunger Solutions works to create a hunger-free community and improve the nutrition, health, economic security, and well-being of low-income District residents.

Children are arriving at afterschool programs hungry. According to a recent report out of the Food Research and Action Center, over the 2008-2009 period a shocking 40.6 percent of households with children said that they had difficulty affording enough food, compared to just 12.5 percent of households without children. These appalling statistics stress the urgency of connecting every child in the District to a regular, reliable, and healthy source of food. Fortunately, D.C. has recently made an important step toward this goal.

In October 2009, D.C. joined 13 states in the country participating in the Afterschool Supper Program, which is part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program, locally administered through the Wellness and Nutrition Services Department of OSSE. This program provides federal funds to afterschool programs run through schools or community organizations to serve suppers to children age 18 and under during the school year (including weekends, holidays, and school breaks). For an afterschool program serving supper to 50 children 5 days a week after school, this translates into more than \$24,000 in federal funding. The money provided through this program will not only help these organizations feed the children they serve nutritious food that must comply with federal nutrition guidelines, but also, in doing so, free up monies they are currently spending on food to support other program activities.

Afterschool meals in particular are increasingly important because more and more children are spending long hours in afterschool programs, in many cases while their parents are working, often nontraditional hours. In other cases, families are feeling the impact of this recession and don't have the resources to provide a healthy supper. By the time children arrive at their afterschool program, lunch is a distant memory. They need a supper and snack to help get them through the afternoon. Providing healthy food after school allows children to be fully engaged in the activities at their afterschool program.

D.C. Hunger Solutions has been working closely with Sandra Schlicker, director of OSSE Wellness and Nutrition Services, and the CACFP team at OSSE, led by Norma Birckhead, with Patricia Freeman, and Suzanne Henley, who have all been working hard to roll out this new and exciting program out as quickly as possible.

We seek to connect every eligible afterschool program with afterschool meals. However, rolling out a sustainable model of afterschool supper requires city-wide support. To this end, Council can play a role in four main ways:

- Working with OSSE and other agencies to streamline the process needed for sites to comply with the federal supper requirements. These requirements include a fire inspection, a health inspection, and sometimes a certificate of occupancy. Because it takes coordination between several agencies, it can be challenging and expensive for small sites to navigate this process. Luckily, organizations such as D.C. Central Kitchen and the Capital Area Food Bank have stepped up to act as sponsors for some of these programs. Sponsors handle the application process, most of the paperwork, and distribution of meals, greatly reducing the burden on smaller programs. The sponsorship model is a good and sustainable one, and sponsors should be encouraged to take on more programs. More coordination between agencies to help fast-track the necessary approval for participation would make it possible for sponsors to do this.
- There is an exciting opportunity to work with the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), under the guidance of OSSE, to develop a “school year feeding program” similar to the summer feeding program, which has been ranked the best in the country for six consecutive years. This is in large part because DPR sponsors over 200 DPR and community sites in the summer.
- Encourage D.C. Public Schools and Charter Schools to implement supper programs and benefit from the influx of federal funding, which would cover

almost all food and administrative costs. DCPS already does an excellent job providing snacks to its close to 100 schools with afterschool programs.

Transitioning these programs from snack to a full and nutritious supper should be an educational priority.

Together we can make use of this important and unique opportunity to feed more District children in need.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Vinopal
Nutrition Associate
D.C. Hunger Solutions / Food Research and Action Center
1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 540
Washington DC 20009
(202) 986-2200 x3042

Enclosure: Afterschool Supper brochure