

March 9, 2004

The Honorable John Boehner  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
2181 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Boehner:

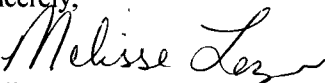
On behalf of the Hispanic Education Coalition (HEC), an *ad hoc* coalition of national organizations dedicated to improving educational opportunities for over 40 million Hispanics living in the United States and Puerto Rico, we write to thank the Committee for working in a bipartisan manner to draft legislation, the "Child Nutrition Improvement and Integrity Act of 2004" (H.R. 3873) which would improve access to nutritious meals to millions of Hispanic and migrant children. The reauthorization of the child nutrition programs is of critical importance to Latinos, who often depend on these programs for access to nutritious meals.

The HEC supports H.R. 3873 because it would safeguard access to child nutrition programs for Latino and farmworking families. More specifically, we applaud efforts to:

- **Directly certify migrant children.** This legislation extends automatic eligibility to children who qualify for migrant educational services under Title 1, part C of the No Child Left Behind Act. This modest change makes it easier for migrant children to begin getting school meals as soon as they enter a new school.
- **Safeguard access to child nutrition programs for families that face literacy and language barriers.** This legislation sets standards for communications with these families when they are seeking to participate in the child nutrition programs. As a result, low literate and limited English proficient families will now be more likely to (1) apply, (2) comply with verification notices, and (3) benefit from nutrition education outreach efforts.

The "Child Nutrition Improvement and Integrity Act of 2004" takes an important step forward in ensuring that all children benefit from healthy meals. More important, it shows that when Congress works in a bipartisan manner, it can develop substantive policy proposals that effectively improve the lives of Hispanic children and families. The HEC member groups will be sure to let our constituents know about the efforts of this Committee and keep them informed of future activities of the Committee.

Sincerely,

  
Melissa Lazarin, HEC Co-chair  
National Council of La Raza

  
Manda Lopez, HEC Co-chair  
National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association

cc: Ranking Member George Miller

