



OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Labor

Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

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Full Committee Markup

H.R. 8048, *Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act*

H.R.2193, *Asunción Valdivia Heat Illness and Fatality Prevention Act*

Wednesday, July 27, 2022 | 10:15 a.m.

Today, the Committee is marking up legislation to protect workers from heat-related illness and death; and help address and prevent child hunger.

The first bill, the *Asunción Valdivia Heat Illness and Fatality Prevention Act*—led by the gentlelady from California, Ms. Chu, the gentlelady from North Carolina, Dr. Adams, the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Grijalva, and myself—will protect workers against occupational exposure to excessive heat.

Excessive heat is one of the most common and dangerous workplace hazards. Yet, half a century after the Occupational Safety and Health Administration was established, we still have no federal standard that protects workers against heat illnesses and fatalities. Without this basic protection, hundreds of workers in fields, factories, warehouses, construction sites, and other workplaces continue to suffer needless and preventable deaths, illnesses, and injuries.

In 2004, after picking grapes for ten straight hours in 105-degree temperatures, Asunción Valdivia over and was unconscious. Instead of calling an ambulance, his employer told Mr. Valdivia's son to drive his father home. On his way home, he started foaming at the mouth and died of heat stroke. Because of the lack of preventative heat safety measures and emergency planning, a son had to witness his father die a preventable death. That death, at age 53, was completely avoidable, yet his story is not unique.

Regrettably, the reality of climate change is upon us. And with that, it means that temperatures will continue to rise globally, placing workers at an increased risk of illness or death. In fact, last Sunday, 85 million Americans faced either heat warnings or advisories as weekend temperatures rose to triple digits in many regions around the country.

The *Asunción Valdivia [Ah-soon-see-own] [Val-dee-vee-ah] Heat Illness and Fatality Prevention Act* will require OSHA to establish an enforceable standard to protect workers in jobs at risk for hazardous heat stress with measures like paid breaks in cool spaces, access to water, limitations on time exposed to heat, and emergency response for workers with heat-related illness. Finally, the legislation requires OSHA to establish a heat standard on a much faster track than the normal OSHA regulatory process.

Workers deserve no less, particularly as heat-related illnesses and deaths rise.

The second bill, the *Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act*—led by myself and the gentlelady from Oregon, Ms. Bonamici—helps address and prevent child hunger.

One of the key lessons reaffirmed by our response to the COVID-19 pandemic is that, when we invest in child nutrition programs, we help reduce child hunger. In fact, from January 2021 through April 2021, food shortage rates among households with children fell by more than 40 percent—thanks to the investments in several COVID-19 relief packages. Still, have more work ahead to achieve our ultimate goal—eliminating child hunger in America.

To do so, we must ensure that federal child nutrition programs have the resources they need to feed children. Unfortunately, Congress has not reauthorized federal child nutrition programs in seven years, and as communities see higher rates of food insecurity and families face higher costs, Congress must deliver the evidence-based, comprehensive legislation that children and families need.

The *Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act*:

- Expands access to school meals by making it easier for schools to use the Community Eligibility Provision;
- Lowers the cost of school meals programs for school districts by increasing the reimbursement rate and providing breakfast commodity support;
- Expands WIC eligibility from age five to age six;
- Strengthens the food program for children in child care; and
- Increases food aid during the summer by providing transportation assistance to food distribution sites and creating more sites in low- to middle-income neighborhoods.

This legislation is the result of four hearings on the reauthorization of child nutrition programs and includes many of my colleagues' priorities. Despite being unable to come to a bipartisan agreement, I am hopeful that all of my colleagues will join us in our efforts to keep children from going hungry and build on the success of our bipartisan work in the *Keep Kids Fed Act*.

Taken together, these bills will help ensure workers, children, and families have the opportunity to succeed.