

I take great pleasure in signing H.R. 515, a bill which amends the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act. This legislation will help the Administration achieve its goal of expanding the school lunch program for all children and providing free or reduced price lunches for every needy child.

We have come a long way in the past year in the fight to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. Important changes have been implemented in the food stamp program, and participation is expanding rapidly. More than 9 million people are now receiving either food stamps or donated commodities. The child nutrition programs have been expanding. More than 20 million children participate in the National School Lunch Program at an average price to each student of 30¢ per meal and 4.5 million of these are needy students who receive lunches entirely without cost or at a substantially reduced cost.

The child nutrition programs--school lunch, school breakfast, and feeding programs in day care centers and summer camps--have a special importance in the fight for good nutrition. The student who is well fed is more attentive and learns better. Nutrition can be an important key to helping children break out of the cycle of poverty.

The legislation I am signing will provide vast improvements in our child nutrition programs. These are cooperative programs, run by State and local governments, with Federal support. This legislation will allow local school boards more flexibility in budgeting, since Federal funds can be appropriated a year in advance, and since funds can be shifted from one program to another. It will provide for a modest amount of matching funds to come from State revenues. In addition this legislation

will assure that every child from a family below the poverty line gets a free or reduced price lunch.

With this legislation we make an important stride forward in child feeding. I hope that State and local governments will share our enthusiasm in building ever better child nutrition programs on the basis of our cooperative Federal, State, and local experience.