

April 11, 2014

The Honorable Mark Pryor  
United States Senate  
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
United States House of Representatives  
2369 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
United States Senate  
260 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Sam Farr  
United States House of Representatives  
1126 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Pryor, Senator Blunt, Representative Aderholt, and Representative Farr:

We, the undersigned members of the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity, write to express our concern with the inclusion of language in the Joint Explanatory Statement of the 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act that would establish a waiver approval process for the 2014-15 school year for any local educational agency that incurs increased costs in order to comply with the updated nutrition standards for school breakfasts and the updated nutrition standards for snack foods and beverages sold in schools.

This language has the potential to undermine decades of hard work by parents, education and health professionals, schools, and members of Congress from both political parties to establish practical, science-based nutrition guidelines for all foods sold in schools. As you know, child nutrition and obesity inextricably affect our nation's physical and fiscal health. One out of every three children in America is overweight or obese and even more consume diets too high in saturated fat, sodium, and sugars, and too low in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. With children eating up to half of their calories at school, improving school foods is a key step toward supporting healthful eating.

Despite some challenges, 90 percent of school districts across the country report that they are meeting the updated school lunch standards. Many of the most successful are coupling healthier meal standards with improved snack food standards, as reducing competition from less-healthy options increases student participation in the school meal programs. In fact, studies show that when school districts serve healthier snack foods and beverages they are more likely to maintain or even increase total revenue. In addition, the updated national standards will help reduce costs for food and beverage manufacturers by streamlining product production and distribution, helping to reduce costs and increase availability of healthy options for schools.

Science-based nutrition guidelines for school foods improve children's diets, support health and nutrition education, reinforce parents' efforts to help their children eat healthfully, and help protect the federal investment in school meals. As with any program updates and improvements, it is not surprising that some participants may struggle more than others to succeed. The solution to addressing these challenges is to help struggling schools learn from the many that have been successful and provide them with the training and technical assistance they need to support the health of our nation's children.

We look forward to working with you, other members of Congress, USDA, state agencies, and schools to support implementation of these important school nutrition standards.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Better Children's Diets

First Focus Campaign for Children

American Academy of Pediatrics

Genesee Dietetic Association

American Academy of Sports Dietitians and Nutritionists

Healthy Schools Campaign

American Heart Association

Indiana Rural Health Association

American Public Health Association

Iowa Public Health Association

Arkansas Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

National Association of County and City Health Officials

Association of State Public Health Nutritionists

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

California Center for Public Health Advocacy

National Association of School Nurses

California Project LEAN

National Consumers League

Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund

National PTA

Center for Behavioral Epidemiology and Community Health, Graduate School of Public Health, San Diego State University

National Research Center for Women & Families

Center for Communications, Health & the Environment

New York Coalition for Healthy School Food

Center for Science in the Public Interest

New York State Public Health Association

ChangeLab Solutions

Nutrition First

Columbus Public Health

Parents Educators & Advocates Connection for Healthy School Food (PEACHSF)

Defeat Diabetes Foundation

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine

D'fine Sculpting & Nutrition LLC

Pinnacle Prevention

Earth Day Network

Prevent Cancer Foundation

Project Bread

Public Health Institute

Real Food For Kids

Real Food for Kids – Montgomery

Society For Nutrition Education and  
Behavior

Society for Public Health Education

The Pew Charitable Trusts

Trust for America's Health

Tweens Nutrition and Fitness Coalition

United Fresh Produce Association

Upstream Public Health

Utahns Against Hunger