

July 24, 2018

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senate
478 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Gillibrand,

We, the undersigned organizations, are pleased to support your bill, ***Developing Best Practices for Integrating Food and Nutrition Concepts into K-12 Education Act***. If enacted, the bill would test promising strategies for integrating food and nutrition education into elementary and secondary education.

America's children are facing a health crisis in the form of diet-related disease. One in three children are overweight or obese and on track to develop diabetes. Kids and adults with diet-related disease are more likely to score lower on tests, miss more school, and advance less in their careers. In short, today's poor diets will lead to tomorrow's poor economic outcomes.

Experts agree that nutrition education can help change food selection and consumption behaviors among students. Yet, on average, schools spend only 3.4 hours on nutrition education in elementary schools, 4.2 hours in middle school, and 5.9 hours in high school. This is despite studies indicating that students should be provided with developmentally appropriate nutrition education for 40-50 hours each school year, and interest from teachers to provide nutrition education after meeting other education standards.

Expert recommendations from both the National Academy of Medicine and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourage schools to integrate food and nutrition education with core subject areas such as science, reading, and math. For example, a teacher could use a garden-based lesson about growing vegetables as a means to teach biology. Integrating food and nutrition concepts into K-12 education would not take away from existing instruction time and would only have minimal costs.

This bill would establish pilot projects to test the best strategies for integrating food and nutrition education into K-12 education. These pilot projects would be evaluated and the results would be disseminated to inform future local, state, and national efforts to expand school-based nutrition education programs. The bill would also start collecting national data on local education agencies implementing such integrated nutrition education.

Like you, we know that this epidemic of unhealthy eating and diet-related disease is a solvable problem and that there are many strategies we must pursue to reverse these trends. This bill is an important first step that will help us identify best practices in delivering high-quality integrated food and nutrition education that will promote a healthier generation of kids. We are pleased to support this bill and look forward to working with your office and with other members of Congress to see it enacted.

We thank you for your leadership on policies that promote childhood health and wellbeing.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK)
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Heart Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Nutrition
Association of State and Public Health Nutritionists
Bronx Health REACH / Institute for Family Health
First Focus Campaign for Children
FoodCorps
Healthy Schools Campaign
Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Teachers College, Columbia University
National Education Association
National Farm to School Network
National WIC Association
Nutrition Policy Institute, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources
Real Food for Kids
Society for Nutrition Education & Behavior