



June 10, 2014

Dear Representative:

On behalf of National PTA's 4.3 million members comprised of parents, families, students, administrators and community members, I write in opposition to language included in the Fiscal Year 2015 Appropriations Bill that would scale back nutrition standards for school meals.

PTA has a storied history in school meals – piloting a national hot lunch service in schools that predated the National School Lunch Program. Over 70 years later, we continue to value the importance of school-based meals that are healthy and nutritious. At a time when one-third of our nation's children are overweight or obese, we cannot stand for scaling back nutrition guidelines and comprising our federal investment in children's health.

I also implore you to listen to parents in this debate – as their children are the very consumers this program is intended to serve. In addition to opposing the underlying policy of waivers, the waiver as currently written does not require any prior consultation or notification to parents before a waiver is requested or approved. Parents may never know that their children's school has opted out of healthier meals or that the meals served in the cafeteria have reverted to the older, less healthy meal patterns.

As parents, families and community members deeply involved in our schools, we know that change can be difficult for both adults and children. However, doing the right thing for students is always our priority despite the challenges that may be faced along the way. At a time when families are working hard to live healthy lives, school meals should be supporting families' efforts, not working against them. And any necessary adjustments to the program should be done by working directly with the U.S. Department of Agriculture through the authority that has already been granted to them by Congress, or be debated openly through reauthorization of the School Lunch Act, due to be reauthorized in 2015.

For decades, Congress has wisely ensured that federal child nutrition programs have been guided by science. It is our belief that our nation's children and families are best served when these programs' nutrition guidelines are not dictated through the appropriations process.

We stand committed to working with families, students, schools, Congress and the USDA to ensure the nation's child nutrition programs are accessible, nutritious and successful. We ask that you oppose language scaling back the nutrition standards and support efforts to restore nutrition standards in the Fiscal Year 2015 Agriculture Appropriations Bill.

If you have any questions, please contact Mollie Van Lieu, Senior Education Policy Strategist, at mvanlieu@pta.org.

Sincerely,

/s
Otha Thornton
National PTA President

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, I write to urge you to **oppose the inclusion of any policy riders to weaken, delay or otherwise alter any child nutrition programs in the FY 2015 House agriculture appropriations bill**. Congress should not use the appropriations process to intervene in science-based rules regarding federal child nutrition programs. Over 90 percent of schools are meeting the new school meal standards and [USDA has show flexibility](#) in working with schools to address specific concerns and help them comply with the [updated standards](#).

Unfortunately, the House agriculture appropriations bill contains a waiver to allow schools to opt out of school meal nutrition standards. We urge you to support any efforts to remove this language from the bill.

Please find attached a [statement signed by more than 200 national, state and local organizations](#) opposing efforts to use the appropriations process to weaken, delay or alter child nutrition programs.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Best regards,

Don Hoppert

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Dear Congresswoman Pelosi:

On behalf of the 3 million members of the National Education Association (NEA), and the students they serve, we urge you to OPPOSE provisions in the FY 2015 Agriculture Appropriations bill that would undermine or delay new nutrition standards for school meals adopted under the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act and SUPPORT any efforts that would restore these vital standards. Nearly 500,000 of our members are Education Support Professionals (ESPs), many of whom are food service professionals who prepare school meals, maintain a safe and healthy learning environment, and help students learn about and practice healthy nutrition and eating habits. We offer these comments from the perspective of representing the entire range of education professionals who contribute to student wellness. Votes associated with this bill may be included in the NEA Legislative Report Card for the 113th Congress.

The nutrition standards set out in the bipartisan Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act have had widespread, positive impacts on children's access to healthy foods during the school day. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that over 90 percent of schools are successfully meeting the updated nutrition standards. The result being a healthier school environment with more nutritious food options for students.

NEA believes that proper nutrition is essential to child development and student success. The clear link between good nutrition and learning is evident in schools across the nation every day. According to the Nutrition Cognition Initiative at Tufts University, continuous low nutritional intake affects factors such as motivation and attentiveness, which can have a negative impact on learning.

Childhood obesity has been a growing problem for decades. We now face a national childhood obesity crisis, with nearly one in every three of America's children being overweight or obese. Obesity can lead to severe and chronic health problems during childhood, adolescence and adulthood, including heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and asthma. And, the associated health risks impose great costs on families, our health care system, and our economy. Especially concerning is the fact that the obesity epidemic is disproportionately higher among children living in low-income families, according to data from the National Survey of Children's Health. Among adolescents, the total excess cost related to the current prevalence of obesity is estimated to be \$254 billion – \$208 billion in lost productivity and \$46 billion in direct medical costs (American Heart Association, 2013).

In addition to fighting obesity, school meals play a critical role in fighting hunger. Sixteen million children, or 1 in 5, live in households that struggle to put food on the table (USDA, 2012). For these students, sometimes the only sufficient meals they may get are at school. We owe it to them to make sure that school meals are as nutritious as possible.

Food service professionals, like NEA member Roselyn Green, a cafeteria bookkeeper at Lester Elementary School in Florence, South Carolina, work every day to help meet the goal of providing nutritious meals to students. According to Roselyn, her school is serving more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in every meal and fewer foods high in sodium and saturated fats, thanks to the new standards. These food service professionals have also been instrumental in helping their students make healthier food choices as well.

NEA strongly supports the school meal nutrition standards in the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act. These common-sense requirements are essential to ensuring all children a healthy and successful start in life, particularly those whose families cannot afford to provide fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods at home on a regular basis. The benefits and cost-savings to our children and our nation in the long-run will be significant.

We urge you to OPPOSE provisions in the FY 2015 Agriculture Appropriations bill that would undermine these important nutrition standards and SUPPORT any efforts that would restore them.

Sincerely,

Dennis Van Roekel
President

June 10, 2014

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Pelosi:

I am writing on behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children (FFCC), a national bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, regarding the upcoming Fiscal Year 2015 Agriculture Appropriations legislation (H.R. 4800).

Federal child nutrition programs help alleviate hunger and improve child obesity rates, as both can be a consequence of inadequate diets and poor nutrition. Nearly one in five children in our country lives in a family that struggles to put food on the table throughout the year. Federal nutrition programs are effective investments that protect against hunger, improve nutrition, and promote health. Programs are specifically targeted to children and other vulnerable populations.

FFCC appreciates the U.S. House Appropriations Committee's efforts to fully fund child nutrition programs in the committee's bill, including the \$25 million for school meal equipment grants and \$27 million for summer food service pilots, but we oppose the FY2015 Agriculture Appropriations bill in its current form.

FFCC opposes efforts to use the appropriations process to change or weaken federal child nutrition programs. This includes efforts to alter or delay implementation of meal standards in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. If schools face budget constraints, Congress should ensure that schools have the resources to meet standards, not to lower the standards that protect children.

With over 90% of schools meeting the new standards and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) continuing to provide extensive technical assistance to schools, now is not the time to roll back the improvements to school meals. USDA has periodically made changes to the new standards when it made sense to allow schools to have more flexibility. The Department did this to make it easier for the standards to be successfully implemented by school food service directors and the staff that administer the programs, all while still working towards the goal of serving healthy food to all kids.

FFCC opposes efforts that take away USDA's authority to decide what fruits and vegetables are in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food package. Because WIC is a supplemental program it is important that USDA rely on current science to decide what is lacking in this population's diet and only include those items. Women and children receive \$8-10 a month for the fruit and vegetable voucher and this money should be targeted towards the important nutrients that they are lacking.

USDA is currently in the process of reviewing the WIC food package and FFCC supports this being completed before changes are made to the food package. The current WIC policy on white potatoes reflects the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine, in keeping with WIC's long-standing commitment to science-based nutrition policy and should only be changed once the review is completed.

FFCC urges members of the United States House of Representatives to support amendments that would remove the above harmful provisions from the legislation. Without these changes FFCC does not support the legislation moving forward.

Child nutrition programs are vital tools in protecting against hunger and improving childhood obesity rates through providing balanced diets for all of our nation's children and the programs should be strengthened and built upon, rather than weakened.

Sincerely,
Bruce Lesley
President
First Focus Campaign for Children

June 10, 2014

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the more than 1.5 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, I strongly urge you to oppose provisions in the FY 2015 Agriculture Appropriations bill that would roll back the healthy nutrition standards in our National School Meals Program.

A recent study from the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation states that nearly 30 percent of the world's population is considered obese or overweight. Most startling, the obesity rate among children has increased by a staggering 47 percent in the last 33 years. At the same time, many American families live in communities where serving healthy food regularly is not an option. This is simply because there is no place near their homes to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. Some communities do not even have a grocery store.

These facts reinforce the need to maintain the higher nutritional standards for school meals established by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. The AFT strongly supported the law, as it encouraged moving away from "heat and serve" processed foods by lowering sodium and fats, increasing fruits and vegetables, and cooking healthy meals from scratch again in our schools. We understood those changes would lead to countless benefits for our students, such as decreases in absenteeism, optimal growth and development, increased ability to focus, improved behavior, and learning healthy eating habits they could even share with their families.

From Syracuse to Denver, from Oklahoma City to Baltimore and many places in between, we have seen the benefits of healthier meals, more school gardens, and the incorporation of nutrition into the school curriculum. Our members are on the frontlines, fighting against hunger in our schools. Our food service workers are always working—even sometimes behind the scenes—to make sure every student has something to eat, regardless of his or her meal plan status. Many of our classroom teachers keep a desk drawer or cabinet filled with food and snacks for the students they know will come to school hungry. For years, our members have supported greater access to healthier foods for students, especially those children whose only meals may be the ones they receive during school hours.

Our kids come first. That is why communities, parents, food service workers, and educators came together, demanded change, and supported access to healthier meals for all students. These standards are now in place and are working. The AFT is proud to stand with first lady Michelle Obama, advocates, parents, food service workers, teachers, school support staff and communities in opposition to provisions in the FY 2015 Agriculture Appropriations bill that would undermine the current nutrition standards for school meals.

I strongly urge you to join us and maintain healthy meals in our schools.

Thank you for considering our views on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Randi Weingarten
President