



**Oral Testimony Presented March 24, 2015
to HHS and USDA regarding
2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans
By Mary Klatko**

Good Morning. My name is Mary Klatko, a school nutrition program operator with 40 years of experience working in a wide range of school districts.

I am providing oral testimony on behalf of Becky Domokos-Bays, Vice President of the School Nutrition Association, who is unable to make it today.

SNA represents more than 55,000 school nutrition professionals who provide high-quality, low-cost meals to students.

SNA applauds the process to develop science based nutritionally sound dietary guidance for Americans.

We strongly support the use of the *DGAs* in school menu planning and we believe that federal nutrition standards should be consistently applied to all foods and beverages sold in schools.

The NSLP serves 30 million students daily, providing a key access point for students to receive nutritionally sound meals. Schools have a legal obligation to meet these standards, and are committed to serving the most nutritious and healthiest meals possible.

We agree with the Advisory Committee's conclusions that Americans should be encouraged to consume a diet rich in healthful choices like fruits and vegetables, while limiting sugar-sweetened foods. The committee is also correct in emphasizing that "These dietary patterns can be achieved in many ways and should be tailored to the individual's biological and medical needs as well as socio-cultural preferences." As the Advisory Committee recognized the importance of many patterns meeting a healthful diet, SNA believes schools need to be provided with some flexibility and latitude to determine which food preferences work best in their communities to meet the school meal patterns.

Under new nutrition standards, 1.4 million fewer students choose school lunch each day. It is well documented that school meals are healthier than meals brought from home. We

simply can't afford to have students turning away from healthful school meals for unhealthful alternatives.

We look for common sense guidance that allows school nutrition professionals, who best understand their students' preferences and nutrition needs, the flexibility to plan healthful meals.

Further, SNA would like to emphasize the need for nutrition education among school children, to bolster acceptance of the healthful school meals our members work so hard to prepare.

School nutrition professionals face unique challenges because they must maintain fiscally solvent programs which operate independent of the overall school budget.

SNA's concerns are with regulations that unnecessarily drive up costs and waste, which unfortunately end up limiting resources schools could use to invest in healthier, but more expensive choices for students.

Schools must provide a nutritionally balanced lunch within the current federal reimbursement rate of about three dollars. This reimbursement must cover all the costs of doing business -- food, supplies, labor and other indirect costs associated with meals.

Again, we applaud the work of HHS and USDA and look forward to providing more detailed written comments.