



2016 Position Paper: *35 cent per-meal reimbursement*

- **Increase the per-meal reimbursement for school breakfast and lunch by 35 cents to ensure School Food Authorities (SFAs) can afford to meet federal requirements.**

Since passage of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, new regulations and rising food and labor expenses have drastically increased the cost of preparing school meals. Historically underfunded school meal programs have shouldered this financial burden. In fact, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimated updated nutrition standards will cost school districts more than \$3 billion in additional food and labor costs by the end of Fiscal Year 2016 (Source: [USDA's Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs; Final Rule](#)).

These costs threaten the financial solvency of meal programs and limit their ability to invest in further menu improvements to benefit students. Nearly eight in every ten school districts have already taken steps to offset financial losses in their meal programs, according to a [recent SNA survey](#). School meal programs have reduced staff, cut into reserve funds, deferred equipment investments and limited menu choices.

School meal programs are working to increase scratch-prepared offerings and recipes using fresh, whole ingredients, but they are losing the necessary resources to achieve these goals. It's time for Congress to invest in healthy school meals for students. To preserve the sustainability of school nutrition programs, Congress must increase the federal reimbursement rates for school breakfast and school lunch.

Prior to implementation of any new legislation and regulations, Congress should provide full funding to cover all related costs identified through economic analysis.