



2016 Position Paper: *Talking Points*

- Every school day, 30 million children depend on school nutrition programs to nourish their bodies and minds.
- SNA represents 56,000 school nutrition professionals who plan, prepare and serve school meals.
 - We are committed to serving students healthy meals while being responsible stewards of federal funds.
- School meal programs are expected to operate as businesses, without relying on local school district funds.
- These programs are historically under-funded. We are struggling more than ever to manage increased food and operating costs, heightened by recent regulatory mandates.
 - The financial sustainability of our programs is threatened, to the detriment of the students, school districts and communities we serve.
- SNA is asking Congress to help restore the fiscal solvency of school nutrition programs and streamline requirements to ease administrative burdens on schools and families.

CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION:

Swiftly pass a robust Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill, including the Senate agreement on school meal standards, so school nutrition programs can responsibly plan for the upcoming school year.

- SNA was pleased to work alongside USDA, the White House and the Senate Agriculture Committee to reach a bipartisan agreement to improve the nutrition standards for school meals.
- The agreement preserves strong nutrition standards and provides school meal programs flexibility to plan healthy menus that appeal to students. (*Refer to Nutrition Standards Agreement one-pager for more details.*)

- School nutrition professionals are already planning for the upcoming school year. By enacting this agreement, Congress will help ease operational challenges for school nutrition programs and ensure more students come back to the cafeteria to enjoy healthy school meals.

FUNDING:

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 costs have drastically increased the cost of preparing school meals.
 - USDA estimated the updated nutrition standards will cost school districts more than \$3 billion in additional food and labor costs (*Source: [USDA's Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs; Final Rule](#)*).
- This threatens the financial solvency of meal programs and limits their ability to invest in further menu improvements to benefit students.
- When school meal programs can't cover their costs, school districts must pick up the tab, to the detriment of all 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](#).
 - These include reducing staff, cutting into reserve funds, deferring equipment investments and limiting menu choices.
- School meal programs want to increase scratch-preparation and invest in creative 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.
- *If asked: A 35 cent increase in the reimbursement rates would cost \$2.57 billion annually, based on the number of breakfasts and lunches served in FY 2015 (Source: [USDA January Keydata Report](#)).*
 - *Refer back to the point above on the estimated \$3 billion additional food and labor costs associated with the updated regulations.*

Provide 10 cents per breakfast in USDA Foods to support the School Breakfast Program.

- With 1 in 5 children living in food insecure households, the School Breakfast Program is critical to ensuring students receive the nutrition they need to succeed at school.
- Research shows students who eat school breakfast perform better on standardized tests, and have improved classroom behavior and attendance.
- USDA estimated the updated nutrition standards would add 27 cents to the cost of preparing every school breakfast, but Congress provided no additional funds to help schools offset these costs (Source: [USDA's Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs; Final Rule](#)).
- Currently, schools receive USDA Foods support for school lunch, but there is no commodity support for school breakfast.
- Providing USDA Foods for breakfast will help offset the increased cost of meeting new breakfast requirements, assist schools in improving menus and support America's agricultural producers.
- *If asked: 10 cents in breakfast commodities would cost \$233 million annually, based on the number of breakfasts served in FY 2015 (Source: [USDA January Keydata Report](#)).*

PROGRAM SIMPLIFICATION:

Provide \$1 million for an independent study of federal reporting requirements for Child Nutrition Programs in an effort to develop a more efficient, unified and consolidated reporting system.

- Through the years, changes in Child Nutrition laws and regulations have resulted in multiple layers of reporting requirements for school meal programs.
- Many of the mandated reports have overlapping data requirements and arbitrary submission deadlines.
- Duplicative and overly burdensome administrative mandates make inefficient use of school nutrition directors' time, keeping them at their desks instead of in cafeterias, interacting with students and staff.
 - That time could be better utilized for program improvements, such as hosting student taste tests, planning nutrition education initiatives and improving cafeteria operations.
- Pursuing a unified and consolidated reporting system would minimize burdens on State Agencies and School Food Authorities, allowing school nutrition professionals to focus on their mission of serving students.

UNPAID MEAL CHARGES:

Compel USDA to complete its report and implement regulations that effectively address debt arising from unpaid meal charges.

- School nutrition professionals are committed to ensuring students have access to healthy school meals.
- We work diligently to enroll as many eligible students as possible in the free or reduced price meal program.
- Unfortunately, many schools have experienced an increase in the number of non-enrolled children who arrive in the cafeteria without money to pay for their school breakfast or lunch.

- Currently, schools must determine if these students can “charge” their meals or receive an alternate meal, such as a cheese sandwich and milk.
- Since school meal programs receive no federal reimbursement for alternate or charged meals, some districts have accumulated substantial unpaid meal debts that can impact the quality of the program for all students.
- In 2010 as part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (P.L. 111-296), Congress instructed USDA to address the problem of unpaid meal charges.
 - Section 143 required USDA to examine current policies and practices regarding meal charges and alternate meals and report on the feasibility of establishing national standards. The law also instructed USDA to consider testing and implementing the standards.
- USDA has failed to report on this issue. Congress should compel USDA to complete this work and implement standards that address unpaid meal debt.