



## 2015 Position Paper

# Reauthorization of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act

Federal child nutrition programs provide 30 million lunches and 13.5 million breakfasts to students each school day. The School Nutrition Association (SNA) represents more than 55,000 school nutrition professionals on the frontline, serving students and managing school meal programs that help students thrive academically. As Congress considers Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2015, SNA members look forward to sharing their expertise and commitment to these key principles:

- ensure students have access to nutritious, appetizing meals;
- promote healthy school environments;
- simplify regulations and provide flexibility to maximize efficiency and ease administrative burdens; and
- restore financial sustainability of meal programs, which operate independent of school district budgets.

In addition, SNA advocates for the following actions:

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- 1. 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.** Prior to implementation of any new legislation and regulations, Congress should provide full funding to cover all related costs identified through economic analysis.
  - 2. Maintain the Target 1 sodium level reductions and suspend implementation of further targets.** The Institute of Medicine warned that “reducing the sodium content of school meals as specified and in a way that is well accepted by students will present major challenges and may not be possible.” (*School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children*)
  - 3. Grant individual SFAs the authority to decide whether students are required to *take* a fruit or vegetable as part of a reimbursable meal.** SNA supports *offering* a greater variety and quantity of fruits and vegetables; however, the requirement that a student *must take* a ½ cup fruit or vegetable with every breakfast and lunch has increased waste and costs, thus limiting funds for menu enhancements for their programs. SFAs know best whether this mandate has been beneficial or detrimental and should be allowed to decide whether students are required to take a fruit or vegetable with each meal.
  - 4. Restore the initial requirement that at least half of grains offered through school lunch and breakfast programs be whole grain rich.** The current mandate that *all* grains offered be whole grain rich has increased waste and cost, while contributing to the decline in student lunch participation. Students are eating more whole grain breads and buns, but schools are struggling with limited availability of specialty whole grain items and regional preferences for certain refined grains such as bagels or tortillas.
  - 5. Allow all food items that are permitted to be served as part of a reimbursable meal to be sold at any time as an a la carte item.** The *Smart Snacks in School* rule has forced schools to take many healthy school meal options off a la carte menus, unnecessarily limiting student choices and reducing revenue for school meal programs.
  - 6. Modify Section 205, Paid Lunch Equity of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, by exempting SFAs that had a positive fund balance at the end of the previous school year.** Section 205 currently mandates that many SFAs increase their paid lunch prices regardless of the program’s financial solvency.
  - 7. Provide program simplification.** As Congress drafts and USDA implements 2015 Child Nutrition Reauthorization, prompt action must be taken to simplify child nutrition programs and ease administrative burdens on SFAs and State Agencies. The overwhelming complexity of program regulations and administrative requirements is unnecessarily hindering efforts to better serve students.