



CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

TOM TORLAKSON

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

May 22, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Boxer and Feinstein:

As California's State Superintendent of Public Instruction, I believe the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) and subsequent meal pattern requirements are in the best interest of our children. As with any new changes, there are challenges and a period of adjustment, but we are confident these standards are worthwhile. I encourage you to support the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as it moves forward with the implementation of the meal pattern and Smart Snacks in Schools provisions in the HHFKA and to stand against any new waivers or changes to the meal pattern.

While many California schools have implemented the new provisions with great success, some school districts are indicating difficulty in meeting the whole-grain-rich and increased fruit requirements at breakfast. For districts that are indicating challenges, the California Department of Education (CDE) is committed to supporting their success. We will continue to provide extensive technical assistance and training through Webinars, face-to-face workshops, policy guidance, culinary trainings, menu planning resources, and strategies to reduce plate waste and increase meal participation. The CDE also encourages schools to build collaborative relationships between districts and their community to ensure a successful meal program.

I appreciate the Congressional efforts that led to the USDA providing flexibility within the meal pattern by eliminating the caps on grains and proteins. Congress provided further flexibility in the 2012 appropriations bill, which directed the USDA to study the second and third sodium reduction targets for cost, acceptability, and underlying science. The CDE supports this directive to study and determine if the sodium targets are not only appropriate, but also necessary.

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However, I do not support a policy rider in the Fiscal Year 2015 Agriculture Appropriations bill that would delay or roll back nutrition standards for meals or competitive foods. The USDA went to great lengths to align the nutrition standards for school meals with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans; it is imperative to keep improving the nutrition standards so that we can continue to make a difference our children's health.

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Sandip Kaur, Director, Nutrition Services Division, by phone at 916-322-8316 or by e-mail at skaur@cde.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Tom Torlakson

TT:sk
2014-04720

cc: The Honorable Thomas Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture