

### Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act

Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) – which directly impacts the School Lunch and Breakfast programs – is set for renewal this year. Intel from Capitol Hill suggests that the Senate will most likely be the first chamber to release bill text, mainly due to Chairman Roberts' impending retirement in 2020.

Currently, it's clear that the Senate Agriculture (AG) Committee is still in the early process of reauthorizing the Russell Brand Child Nutrition Act, as they have yet to introduce priorities or an official release date for the bill. As of July 1, Roberts' latest indication was that the agriculture committee would release its draft bipartisan bill sometime before the August recess.

From our meetings with the Senate committee to date, we are optimistic the bill will exclude provisions that give us pause, including proposals to limit states' ability to broaden Categorical Eligibility, raise the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) threshold, and increase free/reduced-price lunch (FRPL) verification from 1% to 3%. We are not yet in the clear, though. Our work with the committee staff indicates that GOP members, in particular, remain focused on the rate of improper payments to the Federal School Meals programs. This could turn out two ways in the final Senate bill text: (1) Enhanced flexibilities around the administrative provisions of the bill, or (2) Additional reporting requirements for districts.

Contrary to the Senate, the House CNR proposal is still in its infancy as we await Sen. Roberts to make the first move. However, Chairman Scott has stated that "All else equal," he'd like to get CNR done this year. Our primary concern on the House side is the rate of bills aimed at tackling School Meal Debt, which incorrectly applies a one-size-fits all approach to a myriad of state policies on this issue. To fight against the previously mentioned proposals from the House and Senate that would hurt our members, AASA and ASBO International have issued a letter to House and Senate leadership that set the following priorities for this year's CNR:

1. Return to a Five-Year Administrative Review Cycle, which would limit excessive reporting mandated under the shorter three-year Administrative Review (AR) cycle;
2. Modify the Smart Snacks in Schools Rule to ensure all foods sold a la carte and in vending machines meet school nutrition standards;
3. Increase USDA Foods (Commodities) Support for the School Breakfast Program to cover an expected 27-cents hike in price for school breakfast meals;
4. Oppose any effort to Block Grant the School Meals Programs.

#### **Talking Points:**

- In the Senate, advocate for more funding (e.g., "Increase USDA Foods [Commodities] Support for the School Breakfast Program to cover an expected 27-cents hike in price for school breakfast meals.")
- Provide cover for members to oppose federal regulations on unpaid school meals.
  - **Ex 1:** ESSA states policies for unpaid school meal debts should be determined by state and local government that contextually understand how to meet communities' needs.
  - **Ex 2:** In 2018, five states passed laws to regulate how schools address the lack of repayment and debt related to school meals, and an additional 19 states introduced one or more bills on the subject. States are addressing this issue, and we're working to do what's best for students. At this point, federal legislation would create duplicative regulations and exacerbate districts' ability to operate the federal school meals programs.
- Reiterate your opposition against proposals to block grant the School Meals Programs.
  - **Ex:** The success and sustainability of school meal programs depend on continued federal involvement. Block grants would dismantle an effective federal program. Congress must oppose any efforts to block grant school nutrition programs.
- Urge Congress to modify the Smart Snacks in Schools Rule, so that schools can serve nutritionally rich food (e.g., hummus, guacamole and vegetables tossed in olive oil, egg salad and tuna salad, and even green salads paired with low-fat dressing) a la carte.