



Feeding Bodies. Fueling Minds.™

# 2019 Position Paper

School meals nourish the bodies and fuel the minds of nearly 30 million students each school day. The School Nutrition Association (SNA), representing 58,000 professionals who work on the frontlines in school cafeterias, urges Congress and the Administration to strengthen the federal government's commitment to historically under-funded child nutrition programs and minimize unnecessary regulatory burdens. SNA also calls on Congress to:

- **Continue and increase USDA Foods (commodities) support for the School Breakfast Program (SBP).** The FY 2019 Agriculture Appropriations Bill contains \$20 million for breakfast commodities. Expanding USDA Foods to support SBP will allow more students to benefit from a nutritious school breakfast, help schools cover rising costs and advance USDA's mission of supporting America's farmers.
- **Support USDA's ongoing effort to simplify child nutrition programs.** Simplifying overly complex program regulations will minimize costs, allowing school nutrition professionals to invest time and resources into program improvements for students. As part of this effort:
  - **Encourage USDA to return to the five-year Administrative Review (AR) Cycle for School Food Authorities (SFAs) that consistently operate in compliance.** SFAs are overwhelmed by excessive AR reporting requirements and State agencies lack adequate staff and resources to effectively sustain the three-year AR cycle. A five-year cycle for SFAs consistently in compliance will maintain accountability and allow State agencies to conduct more thorough reviews. State agencies will have more resources to provide SFAs support and technical assistance, and school nutrition professionals can focus more time on serving students.
  - **Encourage USDA to modify the *Smart Snacks in School* rule to allow all menu items that are permitted to be served as part of a reimbursable meal to be sold at any time a la carte.** Allowing foods that already meet nutrition standards for school meals to be sold as daily a la carte choices relieves unnecessary menu planning inconsistencies and ensures students can choose from a variety of healthy options in the cafeteria.
- **Urge USDA and the US Department of Education, in collaboration with SFAs, to develop best practices and guidance to ensure school schedules provide students adequate time to eat healthy school meals.** Short lunch periods are a concern for all students – especially millions of food-insecure children who depend on school meal programs. To increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, which take longer to consume, and to minimize food waste, schools must schedule adequate time for students to select and consume their meals.
- **Oppose any effort to block grant school meal programs.** School meal programs depend on entitlement status and guaranteed federal reimbursements for each meal served to ensure students in need have access to free and reduced price meals and to support the health and achievement of all students.

SNA appreciates ongoing efforts by USDA and Congress to address operational challenges and expand student access to free and reduced price meals through direct certification and the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).