

ASSOCIATION OF STATE & TERRITORIAL  
PUBLIC HEALTH  NUTRITION DIRECTORS

October 4, 2012

Kiev Randall, MS, RD  
Partnership Researcher/Coordinator  
USDA Food and Nutrition Service  
Office of Communication & Governmental Affairs  
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 940  
Alexandria, VA 22302

Dear Ms Randall,

The Association of State & Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors (ASTPHND) strongly supports the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010, which updated school meal standards for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). For the first time in over a decade, the school meal standards were updated using the most up to date scientific standards from the Institute of Medicine and the standards align with the Dietary Guidelines of America. While the NSLP is important for all children, school lunch is critically important to those most vulnerable and at risk for the dual conditions of *food insecurity* and *obesity*. Children at risk for hunger and obesity need meals that are balanced and provide adequate nutrition. The new school meal standards do just that with additional servings of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy, and lean proteins. These new school meal standards provide children with calorie ranges to address both childhood hunger and obesity.

ASTPHND is especially supportive of the new increases in fruits and vegetables. Data shows that children and adolescents do not consume the recommended amounts or variety of fruits and vegetables; they consume more fruit juice and less whole fruit, more starchy vegetables and less dark green and orange vegetables and legumes than recommended. While students who participate in school meal programs consume more fruits and vegetables than nonparticipants, they still fall well short of recommended levels. These new school meal standards ensure that children are offered both fruits and vegetables every day of the week. Within the new school meal standards there are no specific maximums on fruits and vegetables. Schools may choose to allow greater amounts than the required minimums by offering self-serve salad bars or allowing second servings of fruits and vegetables. These additional offerings do count toward the weekly calorie limits but fruits and vegetables are lower in calories, high in fiber, which provides satiety, and excellent sources of vitamins and minerals. Two school lunch programs in Riverside, CA and New Haven, CT have shown that salad bars are widely accepted by school children and a natural compliment to the new school meal standards. Both academic research and experience demonstrate that school children significantly increase

their consumption of fruits and vegetables when given a choice. Children respond by trying new fruits and vegetables, which contribute to life-long healthy behaviors.

We are in the midst of a growing child obesity epidemic that ultimately leads to adults with costly chronic illness. Never has there been a more important time to implement these new school meal standards. Millions of children attend school each day, and we believe that our taxpayer-funded school lunch programs should provide a nutritious meal that will provide every child with an opportunity to grow into a healthy adult, without chronic illness.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen L. Probert".

Karen Probert,  
Executive Director

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