



# CALIFORNIA SCHOOL NUTRITION ASSOCIATION

## 2014 Federal Legislative Issue Paper

The California School Nutrition Association is a professional organization with more than 1,500 members. CSNA members are food service professionals committed to providing healthy meals to more than 3.3 million California school children every day. A longtime leader in setting standards for school meals and a la carte sales, CSNA supports continuous improvement through strong state and federal policies. To further the effectiveness of school meal programs, CSNA has taken the following positions:

- ✓ **CSNA supports indexing school meal eligibility and reimbursements to reflect costs.** Federal child nutrition programs provide a basic reimbursement for all meals served -- an essential support for providers who sponsor the programs. The law provides “special assistance” for low income households -- those with income below 130% of the national poverty line are eligible for free school meals, and households between 130% and 185% receive school meals at a reduced price. The problem is that the statute applies a single, national standard for poverty; however, in some communities the cost of living is substantially higher, resulting in families who are living in poverty relative to their location but who find themselves ineligible for the federal nutrition programs that are intended to assist them. GAO is conducting a study of this issue and expects to have a report in early summer to help inform the Congress as it moves forward with child nutrition reauthorization in 2015.
- ✓ **CSNA supports policies that would encourage schools to adjust schedules to ensure students have adequate time to eat.** Many schools work tirelessly to help students eat, be active and enjoy a healthy, balanced lifestyle. Unfortunately some schools don't provide students an adequate amount of time to consume meals. The recently updated USDA meal pattern increases the amount of fruits and vegetables that must be offered in school meals, and these foods require more “chew time”. CSNA recommends schools provide a minimum of 20 minutes for eating after the student is served. Many students complain about not having enough time to eat school lunch. Kids who are well nourished can and do perform better academically. Eliminating the rush to eat also improves cafeteria safety by reducing the possibility of choking incidents.
- ✓ **CSNA supports policies that will educate children about the benefits of nutrition and physical activity for life long wellness.** It is the position of CSNA that sequential, standards-based nutrition education should be incorporated into Pre-K through 12 curriculums in order to provide a foundation of lifelong good nutrition practices, equip students to make nutritious choices and maximize utilization of the school-based Child Nutrition Programs. Nutrition and learning go hand in hand. If nutrition education is coordinated from the classroom to the cafeteria, learning opportunities and experiences will promote the practice of skills and reinforce the attitudes needed for behavioral changes that will positively impact students' health. Nutrition education empowers the student to select and enjoy healthy foods while learning about lowering their risks of chronic diseases and developing healthy lifestyles. Nutrition education is crucial to the well-being of every child.
- ✓ **CSNA is asking Congress to direct USDA to continue to extend flexibility in implementing changes to school meal patterns.** CSNA has long supported continuous improvement in school meal programs and wellness on campuses. But we also recognize school meal programs as a business because failure to do so can result in LEA's having to divert funds from other priorities to support nutrition programs that contribute to success in the classroom. We appreciate Congress's efforts that led to USDA modifying the meal pattern, eliminating the caps on grains and proteins. We ask that Congress continue this by directing USDA to delay implementation of the second set of changes to school breakfast due to go into effect July 1 of this year.

Additionally, in the 2012 appropriations bill, Congress directed USDA to study the second and third targets for sodium reduction for cost, acceptability, and the underlying science. Congress should expand on this directive by delaying implementation of the 2017 targets until two years after the report of the study is delivered to Congress. This delay is essential allow schools and our industry partners to develop menus and products that will meet the target.