



CALIFORNIA SCHOOL NUTRITION ASSOCIATION

An affiliate of the School Nutrition Association

California School Nutrition Association 2010 Federal Legislation Issue Paper

The California School Nutrition Association supports a strong child nutrition authorization this year. We are in full agreement with our national association on key issues that need to be addressed in the legislative process. There are additional issues and perspectives that CSNA wishes to have considered as Congress moves forward with the legislation

- Indexing federal school meal reimbursement rates and eligibility for free and reduced price school meals.

Current law establishes a single guideline for school meal eligibility guidelines and meal reimbursements with the exception of Alaska and Hawaii. Yet there are many regions in the nation with higher cost of living than these two exceptions. This proposal is about equity and equality. The programs must recognize that hunger and poverty are more prevalent in communities with high costs of living, and the federal government's programs must reflect these disparities.

- Consolidation of free and reduced price meal categories into a single standard comparable to WIC guidelines (185% of poverty)

CSNA supports this SNA priority

- Increase reimbursement for all meals

CSNA supports this proposal. However, we would like to see the increase adapted to regional indexing.

- Uniform national standards

CSNA supports strong nutrition standards that are the same for all schools, both within the school meal programs and throughout the school environment. We also believe that the SHAPE menu planning system, developed with and approved by the state agency, and approved in current legislation and regulations, can provide meals that are consistent with the IOM recommendations. Therefore, we wish to see the authority to use SHAPE as a reasonable approach to menu planning continued.

- Time and place rule

CSNA supports giving the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to regulate all food sold on school campuses throughout the school day. We also encourage the Secretary to consider California's standards as a template for developing national standards.

- Indirect Costs

CSNA shares the concern that school districts are not applying uniform guidelines in district administrative costs charged to the school foodservice program. We believe that districts bear some of the cost responsibility for providing nutritious meals to children and, therefore, district operating and administrative costs should not be passed on to the programs.

- Community eligibility

CSNA supports expansion of universal meal provisions that would be based on community costs of living indicators rather than relying on individual family applications. The current system creates barriers for many families. Data that supports community eligibility already exists, therefore it is redundant and costly to require households in these communities to submit applications. A GAO study several years ago conservatively estimated that 8¢ of every federal dollar for school meals went to this administrative activity rather than to feeding kids.

- Commodities for breakfast

California supports including commodity entitlement for reimbursable breakfasts. This will increase the nutrition quality of breakfasts, incentivize schools that currently do not offer breakfast to consider doing so, and supports California's strong agricultural sector.

- After school and summer with California focus

CSNA supports expansion of the afterschool meal program to all states. However, we strongly urge extension of the program to NSLP. In 1998, Congress authorized schools to provide snacks in afterschool programs for education and enrichment. For many children the current snack meal pattern is inadequate and they will not receive a more substantial meal until they return to school the next day. Utilizing NSLP to provide a more substantive afterschool meal also supports nutrition goals, as these meals are likely to be more nutrient dense than other options outside of the school setting.

- Expand direct certification

CSNA support efforts to utilize existing databases for certifying eligibility for school meals where such databases can be used to provide approvals consistent with NSLP eligibility guidelines. For example, if the Medicaid database can identify households with income up to 133% of the national poverty line, those households can be categorically approved for free meals. And where the database can identify households between 133% and 186%, they can be certified for reduced price meals. Not using existing databases is costly and redundant.