AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

S. HRG. 113–366

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF FEEDING AMERICA'S SCHOOL CHILDREN

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

JULY 23, 2014

Printed for the use of the
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

Available via the World Wide Web: http://www.fdsys.gov/

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

89–520 PDF WASHINGTON : 2015

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Publishing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512–1800; DC area (202) 512–1800
Fax: (202) 512–2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402–0001

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY

DEBBIE STABENOW, Michigan, *Chairwoman*

PATRICK J. LEAHY, Vermont	THAD COCHRAN, Mississippi
TOM HARKIN, Iowa	MITCH MCCONNELL, Kentucky
SHERROD BROWN, OHIO	PAT ROBERTS, Kansas
AMY KLOBUCHAR, MINNESOTA	SAXBY CHAMBLISS, Georgia
MICHAEL BENNET, COLORADO	JOHN BOOZMAN, Arkansas
KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND, NEW YORK	JOHN HOEVEN, North Dakota
JOE DONNELLY, INDIANA	MIKE JOHANNS, Nebraska
HEIDI HEITKAMP, NORTH DAKOTA	CHARLES E. GRASSLEY, Iowa
ROBERT P. CASEY, Jr., PENNSYLVANIA	JOHN THUNE, South Dakota
JOHN WALSH, MONTANA	

CHRISTOPHER J. ADAMO, *Majority Staff Director*
JONATHAN J. CORDONE, *Majority Chief Counsel*
JESSICA L. WILLIAMS, *Chief Clerk*
THOMAS ALLEN HAWKS, *Minority Staff Director*
ANNE C. HAZLETT, *Minority Chief Counsel and Senior Advisor*

CONTENTS

Page

HEARING(S):

Meeting the Challenges of Feeding America's School Children 1

Wednesday July 23, 2014

STATEMENTS PRESENTED BY SENATORS

Stabenow, Hon. Debbie, U.S. Senator from the State of Michigan, Chairwoman, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry 1
Cochran, Hon. Thad, U.S. Senator from the State of Mississippi 3

Witnesses

Wiggins, Betti, Executive Director, Office Food Services, Detroit Public Schools, Detroit, Michigan 5
Clements, Scott, Director, Office of Health Schools and Child Nutrition, Mississippi Department of Education, Jackson, Mississippi 7
Bauscher, Julia, President, School Nutrition Association; Director of School and Community Nutrition Services, Jefferson County Public School, Louisville, Kentucky 9
Wilson, Katie, Phd., Executive Director, National Food Service Management Institute, University of Mississippi, University, Mississippi 11
Muir, Phil, President and CEO, Muir Copper Canyon Farms, Salt Lake City, Utah 13

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENTS:

Casey, Hon. Robert, P., Jr. 42
Cochran, Hon. Thad 44
Leahy, Hon. Patrick J. 46
Bauscher, Julia 48
Clements, Scott 53
Muir, Phil 57
Wiggins, Betti 62
Wilson, Katie 66

DOCUMENT(S) SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:

Wilson, Katie:

Online Course Catalog 72
NFSMI Training Topics 73

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Bauscher, Julia:

Written response to questions from Hon. Heidi Heitkamp 80
Written response to questions from Hon. Robert P. Casey, Jr. 83

Clements, Scott:

Written response to questions from Hon. Heidi Heitkamp 87
Written response to questions from Hon. Robert P. Casey, Jr. 88

Muir, Phil:

Written response to questions from Hon. Heidi Heitkamp 91
Written response to questions from Hon. Robert P. Casey, Jr. 91
Written response to questions from Hon. Kirsten Gillibrand 94

Page

Wiggins, Betti:
Written response to questions from Hon. Heidi Heitkamp 95
Written response to questions from Hon. Robert P. Casey, Jr.. 96
Wilson, Katie:
Written response to questions from Hon. Heidi Heitkamp 99
Written response to questions from Hon. Robert P. Casey, Jr. 100

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF FEEDING AMERICA'S SCHOOL CHILDREN

Wednesday, July 23, 2014

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY,
Washington, DC

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:34 a.m., room 328A, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman of the Committee, presiding.

Present or submitting a statement: Senators Stabenow, Leahy, Brown, Klobuchar, Gillibrand, Donnelly, Heitkamp, Cochran, Chambliss, Boozman, Hoeven, Johanns, Grassley and Thune.

STATEMENT OF HON. DEBBIE STABENOW, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MICHIGAN, CHAIRWOMAN, COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY

Chairwoman STABENOW. Good morning, and we are very excited about this hearing and welcome to each of you for coming. I do have to begin by saying we were saying back in the anteroom I think we want to do a hearing on school nutrition every week because we have been given a lot of great food this morning.

We are going to make this a weekly effort. I know that Senator Leahy intends to come, but he brought us some pumpkin squares that we have from the school menu in Vermont, and I have tasted one. It is absolutely delicious. From Bob Casey, we have mushroom and meatballs. These are also great, 50 percent mushroom, 50 percent meat. I feel like I am on the Food Channel right now.

[Laughter.]

Chairwoman STABENOW. These are also excellent. We thank Senator Casey who will be joining us, and we also have and I think Phil Muir from Salt Lake City is going to talk to us about what a half a cup looks like. Right. You brought that for us, and we have got some apple slices. We are here for the duration. We can last a while this morning.

Not to offend my wonderful cafeteria folks where I was growing up in Claire but we did not eat like this when I was in school, this very delicious food this morning.

We are very appreciative of everyone being here for our second hearing on child nutrition and to be able to talk to those in the trenches who are working hard to make things happen in the right way for our children.

Let me just start by saying what we all know, that according to the Center for Disease Control, obesity in young children has more than doubled in the last 30 years. That is why this discussion is

so important. It has grown more than four times higher for teenagers in the same time frame.

That is why we are involved. That is why we care. That is why this is a priority. That means today more than one out of every three children is either overweight or obese. As a country, we spend one out of every five healthcare dollars treating obesity-related illnesses every year.

At our first hearing on this issue, we heard jarring testimony from a military general that 75 percent of our youth cannot qualify for military service, 75 percent.

If we can turn a corner in this country by offering healthy food choices in schools and by teaching healthy eating habits, we will not only improve the health of our children but our country's long-term economic and national security as well.

Today we will examine the way school food service directors, farmers, school administrators, professionals, parents, community leaders are meeting the needs of our children every day by working together to serve healthy meals.

You know, we have all heard the jokes about school meals and certainly growing up the burnt fish sticks and mystery meat tacos and cafeterias full of deep fries. I know from visiting with Betti that those are gone in Detroit, and those days I know are over.

I have had the opportunity to visit many schools all across Michigan and I have been very impressed to see elementary school students enjoying broccoli and pineapple from the salad bars and students learning about where their food comes through farm to school garden efforts that are very exciting.

The really good news is that this is not just happening in Michigan but in schools all across the country. We are seeing schools installing salad bars and serving low-fat turkey burgers and burritos packed with vegetables and whole grains.

Schools are encouraging children to eat healthier by showing them that healthy can taste good too. In some cases, the students are not only enjoying this food at school but they are beginning to ask for it at home, and I have talked to local grocers who on different days have said they run out of different vegetables or fruits and could not figure out what was going on and discovered that was the day it was being served at school and the kids were going home and being for the parents to buy it at night. It is really interesting.

This is so important when we look at where we are right now in terms of childhood obesity. We can only make these important changes if our friends and partners in the food industry, nonprofit organizations, agriculture, state and federal agencies, cafeterias, classrooms all work together.

Today we will hear how schools are providing these fundamental foundational meals every day. Like the ingredients in many of the meals of schools serve, the work each of our witnesses does represents a key ingredient in helping our schools rise to the challenge of feeding our Nation's children.

As we know, this is not an easy task but the goal of reducing childhood hunger and obesity is too important to reverse course now. Instead, we are looking forward of how we can work together.

Today we will examine some of the challenges schools face in providing access to healthy foods, and most importantly, what solutions are there to address many of these concerns.

Thank you again. I want to turn now to my distinguished Ranking Member and friend, Senator Cochran, for his opening remarks.

STATEMENT OF HON. THAD COCHRAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

Senator COCHRAN. Thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman, and we appreciate the attendance of all who are here today. I am especially pleased that we have two witnesses on our panel from Mississippi to discuss the school feeding programs and other programs that comprise federal support and provide the benefits of nutrition and physical soundness that we need in our country.

I think we can continue to improve on the federal role, and this hearing furthers that purpose. Comments and suggestions from our witnesses about ways to improve these programs are welcomed and encouraged.

I believe that there should be local flexibility to accommodate common sense concerns from the administrators at the local level, and any suggestions for changes in the underlying federal legislation supporting these programs is welcomed. We appreciate your participation with us in this endeavor. Thank you.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much, and I know, Senator Cochran, you have come, as you indicated, two distinguished representatives from Mississippi here. We are going to introduce our members and certainly if you want to, at the appropriate point, to introduce your members, your guests, we certainly want you to do that.

Of course as always, our members are welcomed to put opening statements into the record but we will proceed now with the testimony.

I am very pleased to introduce our first witness on this panel, Ms. Betti Wiggins, the Executive Director of Food Services for the Detroit Public Schools, which provides meals to 55,000 students every day.

To date she has helped the district develop 77 school gardens. I have not seen all of them but I have seen a number of them. Certainly they are throughout the city supported by the Farm to School Program and improved the local community by serving minimally processed and locally produced foods whenever possible.

Before joining Detroit Public Schools in 2000, Ms. Wiggins was the Chief of Food Service Administration for the public schools in Washington, DC, also served as the Vice Chair of the Local Food Association, a national trade group for local businesses that worked to increase market access and market share for both seller and commercial buyers of local food.

Now, I will turn to Senator Cochran to introduce our next witness, Mr. Scott Clements.

Senator COCHRAN. Madam Chairwoman, it is my pleasure to present Mr. Clements, who is Director of the Office of Child Nutrition and Healthy Schools at the Mississippi Department of Education.

In this role, he administers eight federal nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, Summer Food Service and Child and Adult Care Food Programs.

In addition, his office directs several school-related health programs. He has 14 years of experience in child nutrition. He is the past president of the Mississippi School Nutrition Association and has served on the USDA Child Nutrition State Systems Working Group.

May I also introduce Dr. Wilson?

Chairwoman STABENOW. You are welcome to.

Senator COCHRAN. Dr. Kathryn Wilson is the Executive Director of the National Food Service Management Institute at the University of Mississippi in Oxford. She serves as an Associate Professor at the University as well.

She holds numerous academic degrees in food science, nutrition, and related fields, and has 23 years of experience as a school nutrition director. She has also served as the president of the School Nutrition Association.

I am very pleased that both of them could be here today to help us review the nutrition programs that are administered by the Federal Government.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much.

Next we are very pleased to have Ms. Julia Bauscher, who is president of the School Nutrition Association for 2014 through 2015 school year. She is also the Director of School and Community Nutrition Programs at Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky where meals to 100,000 students are served in 144 schools.

Prior to joining the school district, Ms. Bauscher was a sales manager for three different food manufacturers. RJR Nabisco, Campbell Soup Company, and AJ Seibert Company.

Since joining the district in 1994, Ms. Bauscher has overseen the development of a central kitchen and has leveraged the community by enlisting the help of a local professional chef to develop recipes.

Finally, we are pleased to have Mr. Phil Muir, who is the president and CEO of Muir Copper Canyon Farm. He oversees his family produce business that began in 1850. You do not look that old actually.

[Laughter.]

Chairwoman STABENOW. That is pretty good. Muir Copper Canyon Farm is based in Salt Lake City, Utah, serving the entire State of Utah and parts of Idaho and Wyoming.

Mr. Muir's clients include K-12 schools and universities, casual and fine dining restaurants. Mr. Muir serves on the Nutrition and Health Council of the United Fresh Foundation. In 2007, Mr. Muir served as Chairman of PRO*ACTIVE, America's leading distributor of fresh produce to the food service industry.

Welcome to all of you, and let me remind you that we do ask you to limit your comments to five minutes. We welcome any other written testimony and information that you would like to give us. But in the interest of time, and we actually have a vote at 11:00 today so we want to make sure we have ample time to move through and ask questions.

We will start with Ms. Wiggins, welcome.

STATEMENT OF BETTI WIGGINS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OFFICE FOOD SERVICES, DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS, DETROIT, MICHIGAN

Ms. WIGGINS. Chairwoman Stabenow, Senator Cochran, honorable members of the Committee, I am Betti Wiggins, the Executive Director of the Detroit Public Schools' Office of School Nutrition. I am honored to be with you here today to address what I believe to be a topic of fundamental importance to all of us: the health and well being of America's children.

As we all know, in school cafeteria lines, there are no Ds and Rs. There are only young Americans who we are all privileged to serve. I am grateful to Chairwoman Stabenow and to Ranking Member Cochran for the deliberative and constructive tone of this Committee's deliberations on this important issue.

The trials and tribulations of Detroit are well known. In a district with declining enrollment and multiple facilities closures in recent years, I have the great pleasure of supervising the provision of high quality meals to approximately 50,000 valued and loved children.

Most of our children eat breakfast and lunch with us, and many also eat supper within our facilities. Our work makes a critical positive difference in the their lives, their families, and our community. DPS was the first school district in the country to make breakfast universally available, supported by several studies that demonstrate a direct correlation between eating breakfast and improved academic performance.

Our lunch program provides free, fresh-cooked, hot foods to all students in all schools. Our menu includes a healthy array of fresh vegetables and fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, 100 percent fruit juices and low-fat milk. We also offer free healthy suppers for numerous at-risk students through our after-school programs.

In Detroit, we have warmly welcome the higher nutritional standards of the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. The legislation and resulting regulations have prompted us to institute changes that are making a positive difference in the lives of our children and our employees.

The improved nutrition standards provide a framework that supports several other provisions of the legislation, including additional training opportunities for school nutrition staff and equipment purchasing assistance.

It is the improved nutrition standards that have allowed us to introduce new equipment in our kitchens. Produce washers, salad bars, vegetable steamers, warming stations and convection ovens are the new norm.

Yes, Senator Stabenow, deep fat fryers are obsolete.

The nutrition standards are a force for positive change in Detroit, a force that we see as a necessity for improving the life long health and well being of our children.

In addition to new equipment, our food distribution partners are finding the products we need to provide our children the quality food they need and deserve. We have found food manufacturers become determined to meet our improved nutrition standards. Food companies of all sizes are developing innovations designed to help us meet the new regulatory requirements.

All of this change is enabling us to be more effectively serve the nutritional needs of all our children. While approximately 87 percent of our children in Detroit are eligible for free school meals, I have discovered through my career that hunger and malnutrition is not confined to children from low-income families.

In fact, food insecurity is as common among children from the end of the cul-de-sac as it is among those from urban street corners. The Community Eligibility Provision, or CEP option, allows high-poverty schools like those in our district to provide breakfast and lunch to all students free of charge, increasing efficiency and reducing hunger.

The program also delivers benefits to our program through reduced administrative burdens resulting from elimination of paper applications. The increased meal participation rates allow me to capture economies of scale, while the savings generated by elimination of paper applications covers the cost of providing meals to children who might otherwise pay, improving the overall financial stability of our programs.

As you are likely aware, 4000 schools in 11 states are now participating in CEP. The work of you and your Committee, Chairwoman Stabenow, is making a critical positive difference in the lives of tens of thousands of Detroit children each and every day.

Each of you knows far better than I that USDA funding is all about improving the economic conditions of rural America. One of my greatest joys and another direct benefit of improved nutrition standards has been increasing our purchase of Michigan grown, Michigan grown farm products.

As the Vice Chair of the Local Food Association, the Nation's only trade association for buyers and sellers of sustainably produced local food products, I am particularly motivated to do my part to increase the market share of local farmers.

Our Farm to School Program has produced partnerships with regional farmers that are generating healthy returns for them and for our children. We are feeding fresh Michigan asparagus to inner city teenagers, and they like it. We are increasing our children's exposure to fresh foods, planting the seeds for lifelong habits that will produce improved health and quality of life.

In addition to fresh vegetables and fruits from nearby farms and Farm to School Programs, we also have the additional benefits of delivering educational opportunities in the cafeteria, classroom visits by participating farmers, and school garden opportunities.

In 2012, DPS and its community partners initiated an effort to create gardens at the schools throughout the district, expanding teachers' access to real-life laboratories to teach children about healthy eating, nutrition, and concepts around growing food while increasing our schools' access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Each site features raised beds bed built by our children, and thereby having access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

The learning centers, these garden sites then become learning centers. We now have 71 schools with gardens. We have a 2 and a half acre school farm and we have reestablished the nationally known Catherine Ferguson Farm. We are also currently engaged in the development of the Kettering Project, which is the repurposing of a closed thirty-acre high school site.

In conclusion, Madam Chairwoman, our recent shared progress toward improving school nutrition programs represents a solid value proposition for the Nation. As leaders responsible for the well being of children, whether we are parents, in Congress, school nutrition officers, in food business or at USDA, we must steal our focus away from the process of change to instead emphasize the progress enabled by the new policies.

Institutional change is difficult, and often seems near impossible. It always takes time and includes short-term discomfort. The investments prompted by improved school nutrition standards have and will continue to generate invaluable returns.

Any short-term pains pale in comparison to the benefits from reform that is both highly desirable and attainable. Change worth making takes time. Nine out of ten school districts across the country are already in compliance with the new standards. We are making it work and work well in Detroit. I am fully confident that all other districts will do the same.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be with you, Chairwoman Stabenow. As a Michigan resident, I want to say how proud and grateful we are for your leadership on this issue. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Wiggins can be found on page 62 in the appendix.]

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much. We are so pleased to have you here today.

Mr. Clements, we welcome you as well.

STATEMENT OF SCOTT CLEMENTS, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF HEALTH SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN NUTRITION, MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

Mr. CLEMENTS. Thank you very much. Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Cochran, and Members of the Committee, my name is Scott Clements and I am the Director of the Offices of Healthy Schools and the Office of Child Nutrition for the Mississippi Department of Education.

On behalf of State Superintendent Wright, the State Board of Education, and our many thousands of food service workers in Mississippi, thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today.

I have a few Mississippi initiatives I would like to discuss. The first of those is our state-wide purchasing cooperative, the first child nutrition state-wide purchasing in the country. This project actually began in 1992 and it is an effort to both lower costs and simplify procurement for local school districts.

The majority of school districts in Mississippi have only a very small number of schools and many of these are rurally located. As such, both product prices and delivery fees were high due to the limited buying power of those small districts. However, by pooling the buying power of almost every school in our State, we are able to utilize the economies of scale inherent with large volume purchasing. This allows us to provide significant savings to participating organizations.

Our office issues bids for foods and related supplies used in excess of $130 million per year. Due to the high volume of purchases, we are able to negotiate prices directly with manufacturers and

sometime, we are able to reduce costs even further by having only delivery phases associated with those items.

Currently, the Cooperative has 183 member organizations with almost a thousand delivery sites. The majority of the participating organizations are public schools, and we have all but two of our school districts in the State participating. We also have a number of Head Starts and governmental agencies who are also participating in the National School Lunch Program.

We are not allowed to use USDA State Administrative Expense Funds to support this program unfortunately. Instead, the Cooperative is self-funded. We charge participants about half a penny per lunch served to pay for staff, travel and office supplies associated with the program.

Our office is also responsible for the ordering and distribution of over $16 million of USDA donated foods annually. Through our Purchasing Cooperative, we already have a statewide delivery system in place so we are able to further reduce the costs for our participating organizations by having those USDA Foods delivered by the same manufacturers and the same brokers.

We have also made use of both the buying power and distribution network of our purchasing cooperative to support Farm to School at the State level. Even though Mississippi is an agriculture-based State, schools face many challenges implementing Farm to School Programs. Many of our State's most abundant crops, cotton and soybeans, obviously cannot go to the cafeteria table. Then we have many of our most plentiful crops also have harvested during the summer season when school is not in session.

To assist our Mississippi schools and our Mississippi farmers, we have worked with the Department of Defense and the Mississippi Department of Agriculture since 2002 to bring locally grown products to schools throughout the State. During school year 2014–2015, we will have about $1,000,000 of locally-grown produce delivered to schools through our office.

Another initiative of our office was to assist schools in meeting the new sodium requirements. When first announced, products simply did not exist to make it available for schools to meet the sodium requirements and still have nutritious and appetizing meals to maintain participation. The buying power of our cooperative again played a role. We were able to partner with a chef from the Culinary Institute of America and a national food manufacturer to provide, actually they produced a new low sodium spice blends. We have three of those available now, and those are now available to schools through the United States. We also supplied schools with 50 standardized recipes to incorporate the new spice blends to reduce sodium in the school meals.

The last thing I would like to talk to you about is school meals, recipes, and the menus. Since 1996, Mississippi has provided Mississippi cycles. It was a coordinated program of the sample menus and recipes that the schools could implement and meet nutrition standards.

That was updated in 2005 but we found with the new Health Hunger Free Kids Act in 2010 that system no longer worked. The menu planning was more complex. We put together a task force. We created Mississippi Recipes for Success.

We now have matrices. We have standardized menus. We have a six-binder set that will be going to all of our schools. We have an online program that is available to any school in the country that would like to participate, and this was all in response to the complex menu planning which we unfortunately felt like our small schools just did not have the resources to implement by themselves.

The last piece of that is again with our purchasing cooperative, Mississippi Recipes for Success, we have standardized ingredients. We have standardized recipes across the board for almost all of our schools in Mississippi; and that has been a benefit to us when it comes to the administrative reviews which are more frequent now than they used to be, are more complex in many ways than they used to be. But by having all those pieces together, it has simplified the process and made it possible for Mississippi to meet those new standards.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before this Committee. I would be pleased to answer any questions or provide additional information as needed. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Clements can be found on page 53 in the appendix.]

Chairwoman STABENOW. Well, thank you very much.

Ms. Bauscher, thank you very much. We are very glad that you are here.

STATEMENT OF JULIA BAUSCHER, PRESIDENT, DIRECTOR OF SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY NUTRITION SERVICES, SCHOOL NUTRITION ASSOCIATION, JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

Ms. BAUSCHER. Thank you. Chairman Stabenow, Ranking Member Cochran, other Members of the Committee, on behalf of the 55,000 members of the School Nutrition Association, thank you for the opportunity to discuss our shared goal of strengthening America's child nutrition programs.

School nutrition professionals recognize the importance of healthy school meals to the academic success of American's students. That is why we have expanded our school breakfast options, increased summer feeding sites, launched new supper programs, and are taking advantage of the new community eligibility provision.

We have worked diligently to improve the nutrition of school menus and we support most of the new regulations. We are increasing the serving size and variety of the fruits and vegetables we offer, serving more whole grains and meeting limits on calories and fats while reducing sodium. We are also making healthier choices more appealing to students and steadily increasing the quantity of local foods we serve.

School attrition professionals are truly committed to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act and its goal of expanding access to school meals, and that is why we are so concerned about the historic decline in student lunch participation.

For thirty years, the National School Lunch Program has grown steadily. But according to USDA, under the new requirements, student participation is abruptly down in 49 states. More than one million fewer students choose school lunch each day, even though

student enrollment in participating schools increased by 1.2 million last year.

Nationwide, we have witnessed a nearly 15 percent decline in paid meal participation. If this trend continues, the school cafeteria will no longer be a place where all students dine and learn healthy habits together, but rather a place where poor students must go to get their free lunch.

Despite our best efforts, schools have struggled with student acceptance of new menu options. Many have been challenged to find whole grain rich tortillas, biscuits, crackers, and other specialty items that appeal to students.

Students have complained that their pastas and breads are burnt, tough or taste strange; and indeed, these whole grains do have a different texture, appearance, and flavor than what students might find at home or in their favorite restaurants.

Food companies serving the school have introduced new foods that meet all of the standards and student tastes, but some of these products are not widely available or affordable, especially to small and rural districts.

School districts with low free and reduced eligibility also face unique challenges under the standards because paid meal participation declines have a greater impact on their budgets. In states like Colorado, Minnesota, New York, and Illinois, some schools are dropping out of the program rather than having to meet the rigid and costly requirements. Most school districts, however, rely on the National School Lunch Program's reimbursements and do not have the option or desire to leave the program.

The School Nutrition Association found that in the 2012–2013 school year 47 percent of school meal programs reported revenue declined while more than nine of ten reported food costs were up. With the federal reimbursement rate for serving a free lunch just over $3, schools are required to serve healthy school meals for less than what most people paid for their morning coffee. Schools must cover labor and benefits, supplies, equipment, and other expenses, leaving little more than $1 for the food for each lunch tray.

Food, especially those required in the new regulations, is getting more expensive. Yet, despite significant increases in prices over the last year, the reimbursement rate adjustment for the coming school year was actually smaller than the previous school year.

In my district, each half pint of milk alone will cost me a nickel more this school year, exceeding the four cent increase for the breakfast. Although we appreciate every penny received, this adjustment comes nowhere close to covering the costs schools face now that they must double the amount of fruit offered at breakfast, up to a full cup.

Meanwhile, now that students must take a fruit or vegetable with their meals, whether they intend to eat it or not, we have watched in despair as much of this costly produce ends up in the trash, $680,000,000 per year, according to Cornell University researchers.

As schools struggle to manage rising costs and waste, what once was a problem for meal programs is rapidly becoming a problem for school districts. We cannot carry over annual losses so school dis-

tricts have to pick up our tab. Financial instability in the meal program can cut into a school district's educational funds.

This fall schools face more challenges as they work to meet the new Smart Snacks in School rules. While many of these requirements are welcome changes, some meal programs have had to strip healthy entree options from their a la carte menus because of the strict sodium limits under Smart Snacks.

In closing, I ask that School Nutrition Association's 55,000 members continue to be part of the on-going discussion as members of the Committee draft the reauthorization language.

Thank you again for inviting me here today and I am happy to answer any questions the Committee has.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bauscher can be found on page 48 in the appendix.]

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much. We certainly intend to have you involved all the way along.

But Dr. Wilson, welcome.

STATEMENT OF KATIE WILSON, PHD., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI, UNIVERSITY, MISSISSIPPI

Dr. WILSON. Thank you. Madam Chair, Senator Cochran, Members of the Committee, I am Dr. Katie Wilson, the Executive Director of the National Food Service Management Institute, at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Mississippi.

I appreciate the opportunity to share our outreach with you today. We are meeting here at a time of unprecedented coverage of the school. School meal programs are not only a key part of the vital health safety net for our Nation's children, but as a past school nutrition director in Wisconsin for 23 years, I believe they are the best safety net for our children. When a child walks through those cafeteria doors, the benefit is in the form of food and the child is assured access to that food.

Due to the scope of that responsibility, school meal programs should also serve as learning tools educating children what a healthy meal looks like. We operate in the education arena, so school meals must be part of that education process.

As a country, we have a serious problem with obesity. It is simply overwhelming to think about the health outcomes of the future. Yet, at the same time, each of us in this hearing room is struggling to balance our idea of what a school meal should consist of and under what guidance school meals should operate.

In a school meals learning exchange with the United Kingdom, I have come to learn that the nutrition standards instituted throughout the United Kingdom years ago are still actively progressing the health and well-being of students. They will tell you it was not easy and it took time for students to accept them, but it was in the best interest for national wellness. Scotland, for example, has begun to see a decrease in dental carries along with other positive outcomes.

Lindsay Graham, School Food and Health Advisor from the United Kingdom, is here in the audience today as a Churchill Fellow from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. She can lend more detail after the hearing if there is interest.

The strong federal support for these programs in the United States is of interest to our colleagues in the United Kingdom.

One of the areas of interest to many child nutrition professionals are the numerous resources available from the National Food Service Management Institute, also known as "The Institute". These resources are all available free of charge to assist everyone throughout the United States and its territories, involved in providing meals to children using the federal school meal programs. The Institute is the only federally funded national center dedicated to assisting child nutrition professionals in improving the quality and operation of child nutrition programs. Authorized by Congress under Section 21 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, it is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other outside foundations.

Training and assistance is available in a variety of formats. We have over 20 training topics from hands on culinary training, financial management, inventory control, and meal pattern training available in a face-to-face format.

With approximately 200 plus trained trainers organized as regional training teams throughout the USDA regions, we have provided face-to-face training for over 7000 child nutrition professionals throughout the United States and its territories during 2012–2013 reporting period. I just got the numbers for this year, and it was well over 8000 participants of face-to-face trainings that occurred.

One specific example of this included Healthy Cuisine Kids Culinary Class, a two day training taught by a chef and a registered dietitian. It is offered whenever a state school nutrition association or a state agency requests it.

In Mississippi, the State Agency organized eight of these classes with over 240 total participants in the State in a two-month period. In California, they organized over 10 of these culinary classes throughout their State with 350 total participants, all funded either by outside foundations or the USDA grant administered by The Institute.

These are hands-on classes offering school nutrition professionals the opportunity to learn new culinary skills or refresh the ones they already have. All other face-to-face topics are available in the same manner. All of our curriculum for these face-to-face trainings are available to download free of charge for districts to use within their own time frame and convenience in an easy to use manner.

Many short training videos are available for download and use in school and child care kitchens as well. These are anywhere from 6-to 20-minute videos on very specific topics such as cooking dried peas and beans. We have many of these trainings available as online training courses. From how to best use USDA Foods, nutrition 101, food safety, norovirus, and others. There are over 40 topics of online courses easy to access from your computer or tablet, all free of charge.

Participants can start and stop them at their convenience and a certificate of completion comes up after the participant completes the course and passes a quiz with a 70 percent learning rate. In the 2012–2013 reporting period, over 33,000 participants registered and completed an online course through The Institute. We again

are looking at exceeding this number as we compile our 2013–2014 report. All available free of charge.

Individual technical assistance is available free of charge if a state agency or regional office requests that assistance for a specific district. We hire a consultant based on the area of expertise needed, go in and help that district come into compliance in whatever area they need.

We have recently worked in two districts in Kansas and are presently working with the New York City with personal technical assistance to their district. These again all free of charge.

Madam Chair, school meals have become a focus point for many in this country. The Institute and many other allied organizations provide great resources for school nutrition professionals as they work to ensure high quality, nutritious meals are being served to our school children.

Although it has become more and more challenging to feed a consumer savvy population, it is important to realize what our job is within that school building. A child will learn life-long eating habits during their tenure in school.

In closing, I would like to thank the Senate for its leadership in providing this hearing and your commitment to our children and child nutrition programs. I am happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Wilson can be found on page 66 in the appendix.]

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much.

Mr. Phil Muir, you are welcome. We are glad to have you.

STATEMENT OF PHIL MUIR, PRESIDENT AND CEO MUIR COPPER CANYON FARMS, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

Mr. MUIR. Thank you. Good Morning, Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Cochran and Members of the Senate

Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.

My name is Phillip Muir. I am the President and CEO of Muir Copper Canyon Farms in Salt Lake City. Thank you for inviting me here today and for calling attention to the critical issue of school nutrition.

I am passionate about making a difference in the nutrition of our school age children. Muir Copper Canyon Farms is a food service produce distributor that provides fresh fruits and vegetables to 52 rural and urban school districts in Utah, Idaho, and western Wyoming with a total enrollment of 450,000 students. We are the USDA/DOD Fresh Prime Vendor for schools and for three Indian Reservations in these three states.

We also provide schools with fresh fruits and vegetables for their Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, School Lunch, School Breakfast and the Summer Feeding Programs. Schools are about 15 percent of our company revenue.

Muir Copper Canyon Farms is an owner member of PRO*ACT, LLC, which is a cooperative of 70 produce distributors across North America who leverage our purchasing power together to make the most price effective, quality assured, and food safe purchases possible. We are also a member of United Fresh Produce Association and I serve on its Nutrition and Health Council.

We have a saying at Muir Copper Canyon Farms, "Our School Customers Deserve the Best". Success to us is students eating more fresh fruits and vegetables going home and telling their parents about the new fruits and vegetables they have tried at school and then helping to improve the family's eating habits.

We consider ourselves more than just a supplier or bid winner. We are a partner with our school customers. Our goal is to be a solution provider through information, training, and consultation assisting schools to successfully implement all of the new fruit and vegetable requirements.

Our staff meets with our school customers throughout the school year to discuss new fruit and vegetable items available, seasonality, buying local produce, and getting the best value for their limited budgets.

We provide schools with our "Fresh Produce Standards and Handling Guide" as a training tool and provide schools with special training workshops, nutrition education materials, Farmer bios, and participate in district Kick-Off events. This is a collaborative relationship. I will highlight a few examples.

For the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, we worked with schools to lower labor and packaging costs while providing them with a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables individually portioned and in a system easy to deliver to the classroom.

We have a booth at the Utah SNA show each year. In June, we demonstrated how schools could grill fresh vegetables in bite sizes. When one attendee said, "We do not have grills in our schools, that is not realistic", we showed them how the same results could be achieved using their school ovens. We have introduced new dark green leafy salad mixes to our schools that are more appealing, nutrient dense, and cost effective.

From our experience, there are a few key points I want to make. Schools that were proactive in improving the healthfulness of their school meals early on, and made incremental changes, and offered nutrition education are not having problems or experiencing significant increased plate waste.

Successful elementary schools that qualify for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program had previously introduced their students to a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables as part of their lunch program. Students eat fresh fruits and vegetables when they are served in great tasting fruits and vegetables presented in an appetizing manner.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans calls for children and adults to "make half their plate fruits and vegetables" at every meal. How can you call school breakfast or school lunch a "meal" if it does not include at least a half cup of fruits or vegetables? After all, it is only half a cup per meal.

The produce industry is committed and stands ready to support school food service directors in successfully implementing the new fruit and vegetable requirements. Just last week, myself, and produce distributors, growers, fresh-cut processors, PRO*ACT, and United Fresh Produce Association hosted a Fresh Produce Pavilion at the School Nutrition Association's annual convention in Boston.

Hundreds of school food service directors came to our "Ask the Experts-Produce Solution Center" to ask questions about writing

Produce RFPs, to talk about how they could procure more fresh and vegetables. We also presented two educational workshop sessions on these subjects, all in an effort to assist the school nutrition community.

We strongly support the continued implementation of the Healthy, Hungry-Free Kids Act of 2010 and maintaining the requirements that school children have access to a wide variety of colorful fruits and vegetables and select a half cup of fruit or vegetable at each meal. This is about improving the health of America's children.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak here today, and I am happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Muir can be found on page 57 in the appendix.]

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much to all of you for your very important testimony.

Let me get into the questions I have. I have a lot of questions and we do not have a lot of time so I ask everyone to be brief so we can all get in as many as we can. I know there is a lot to say.

Betti, Ms. Wiggins, let me start with you because we hear a lot of concerns about the difficulty with getting students to accept new healthy foods and I just think back to myself or my kids when they were in school and so on how things go up and down and new foods come in. It takes time to change and certainly we all know the change can be a challenge even in our own lives.

But you said students are really enjoying the foods, particularly the produce in Detroit, and so I am wondering what you are doing differently that is helping students to want to eat fruits and vegetables.

Ms. WIGGINS. Well, what we did in Detroit, when the 2010 Healthy and Hungry Free Act was passed, I did not wait until 2014 before I started introducing kids. In Detroit, you have to do things early because of the stronger administrative standards that this guy was going to have when he came out to our program.

We used things like the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program where we introduced those items to children. They ate them raw. They ate them in their natural state. Then we put them on the menu.

We also implemented off of first to serve which is permitted, which is flexibility that the USDA provides to us. The kids do not have to take all the items. They just have to leave the line with a couple fruit.

Also, budget permitting, we introduced our local foods. We introduced our local foods at a time. Being from Michigan, an apple was primarily used, Stabenow. We did introduce apples, all the different varieties of apples.

Then if you started early, kindergartners then are fourth-graders now. They understand that this is our lunch program. Fourth-graders then are eighth-graders now and they know this is what a school meal looks like in Detroit. Eighth-graders now are 12th-graders and hopefully when they are going on to college they would have had the experience of eating healthy foods.

It is really about constantly and continuously educating our children, putting the items before them and using the various re-

sources that people like the produce providers, our Department of Education provided to us so that kids get used to seeing these items on their trays.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Mr. Muir, you talk about getting the best value for produce, reducing plate waste which we hear a lot of concerns about, and again across my life watching certainly my friends and I admit once or twice myself dumping things out. I do not think that is new that kids do that.

But could you talk about how, a little bit more about how you are working with rural communities to address the concerns and challenges that have been raised?

Mr. MUIR. Yes, thank you. That is a good question.

First of all, as far as the plate waste, we do work closely with those school districts to try to limit that. I think the best way to fight that is serving appropriate appetizingly prepared fresh fruits and vegetables that someone actually wants to eat.

As far as rural schools are concerned, that is a particular challenge. As an example, we service Cokeville, Wyoming, which is about 153 miles, excuse me about 180 miles from Salt Lake City. 127 families in that community yet we get fresh fruits and vegetables to their school every week. It takes some effort and it takes effort on their part. We have assisted them in the educational pieces so that they can provide the same level of education and add fresh fruit availability as urban schools do. That is one example.

Another one is in Pinedale, Wyoming. If you ever have been to Pinedale, Wyoming, it is not easy to get to. It is out in the middle of beautiful country. It takes a ride on three separate trucks to get there but we get produce there on a weekly basis to them too.

Produce can be distributed to the rural schools but it does take an extra effort either on the organizations like cooperatives like Mr. Clements mentioned or on actually distributors providing educational material to help underpin those small school districts.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you, very much.

Ms. Bauscher, I do not think time wise I am going to have a chance to really get into the issue that I want to but maybe on a second-round on the amount of time children have to actually eat which I know is an issue of concern that we need to talk about but I do want, at this point, just to, first of all, congratulate you on your convention.

Our staff was there, I know Senator Cochran's and mine. It sounds like you had a great convention. I understand there were over 400 vendors that participated. Congratulations on that, and that they all demonstrated products that were compliant and that in order to participate all 400 had to demonstrate products that were compliant with breakfast, lunch, and competitive food requirements. Is that correct?

Ms. BAUSCHER. Yes, we were very fortunate to have many of our industry supporters there to provide a variety of products. Again, industry has really stepped up to the plate to provide products that meet the fat requirements, that are lower in sodium, that are whole grain rich, and we are very thankful for that.

I know in my visits with some reporters on the show floor I went straight to produce row to show them the many new products that produce vendors are offering us.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Right.

Ms. BAUSCHER. Again, our members support the increased quantities of fruits and vegetables, the wide varieties of fruits and vegetables; but many districts are struggling with the challenge of procuring those.

Utah and the area serviced by Mr. Muir are very fortunate. But we are also concerned about again the waste and what is going in the trash can and how that if students could choose it if they like how that money might not go in the trash can but might be used for nutrition education which is very important in getting children to change their eating habits.

Chairwoman STABENOW. I understand. I just think it is a good step forward and I congratulate you on getting 400 vendors that have already adjusted their production capabilities to meet 100 percent whole grain rich sodium one targets, competitive foods, fruits and vegetables. That is a good first step.

We need to continue to work with you but I thought that was a very impressive first step. Let us, at this point, turn to Senator Cochran.

Senator COCHRAN. Madam Chair, thank you very much for your leadership in scheduling this hearing. We appreciate very much the participation of our panel of witnesses.

I want to ask Mr. Clements, as Director of our Office of Healthy Schools and Child Nutrition at the Mississippi Department of Education, what his experience has been with tools such as the menu planner. I am referring to the menu planner which was created at the state level to implement meal standards in schools throughout our state.

What have been your challenges or successes that you could share with the Committee and the panel?

Mr. CLEMENTS. Thank you, sir. I think the biggest success that we have had was we decided in 2010, we came up with an aggressive training schedule and we provided in 2012 and again in 2013 regional sessions for all of our SFAs so that they could get training from our office.

I think that has been critical for again our small school districts to have the tools to implement the changes and, of course, like I said we have the online tool now and the printed versions are coming to them.

The challenges that we have had, unfortunately, have been the complexity of the rules. The expression used in Mississippi sometimes, and I am sure you will appreciate this, coming from home, is we feel like we are drinking from the firehose sometimes.

There have been approximately 150 policy memos that have come out to clarify the regulations since 2010. That has been a very big challenge for us to, one, get those at our level and decide how we are going to implement them and then get that training out to the school districts.

Probably the last these there is, unfortunately, we know our partners at USDA work very hard and we appreciate their efforts but sometimes guidance will come out very close to the implementation deadline. We may get it out a few weeks or a month before it has to be implemented for that school year, and that is hard for us because we have to make our training on what we think will

be in place at the time and we make our best effort there. But sometimes those policy memos will change at the last minute or granted we love some of the exemptions that have come out. They have been very beneficial. But sometimes when they come out at the last minute, it is hard for us to pivot with our purchasing cooperative. We have contracts that are in place sometimes years in advance and then to get the training out to our food service administrators.

Senator COCHRAN. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much.

Senator Brown.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, and thank you. This is a really important discussion and I appreciate all five of you weighing in the way you have. I think the testimony from all five of you has shown us as history illustrates that change is always difficult. You used the term that there is short-term pain, Ms. Wiggins, I think that is right. I think we acknowledge that but I also think that Dr. Wilson's comments about this creates life-long eating habits for young people as they become older people and how important that is.

Thank you for all that you are doing to get through this and make such a change as you have made for such a good while, Ms. Wiggins, in the Detroit public schools and that, Mr. Clements, you are doing in Mississippi and you are all doing so thank you for that.

A couple of questions. The first one for Dr. Wilson. I want to briefly mention the experience in the Cincinnati public schools. Cincinnati, our understanding, was the first school system, big school system in the country that started a school lunch program that was not government-subsidized in those days, 115 or so years ago.

Jessica Shelly, the food service director for Cincinnati public, told us that she serves 50,000 meals a day. She has made that at the salad bars. In every school increased participation in the breakfast program, worked with students to feature appealing healthy meals, done all this while finishing the 2012 school year with a significant profit.

How do we, Dr. Wilson, replicate that success in other big-city school districts and in other school districts generally?

Dr. WILSON. Thank you for the question.

I think that it can be replicated and I think it has been in many other districts as well. Jessica is another one that started early. She did not wait for the deadline. She started early.

The USDA also has a voluntary program called Healthier U.S. School Challenge. It is a voluntary program that started before the meal pattern was put into play as regulation.

Many schools got on board and started with the Healthier U.S. School Challenge, it includes nutrition education, the meal pattern, and physical education. Means Two actually has a training program, a training class for that.

A lot of those schools that started early and got things rolling, they were able to do it. I know in my experience in Wisconsin, I left the district four years ago. I was in a very small rural school district to start my program; and fresh fruits and vegetables, all we

did was put a mandatory you have to serve three colors. That was what my cooks were told to do. An increase in produce and fresh fruits and vegetables skyrocketed because it was served in an appealing manner.

But we also hold a major city training symposium every year with The Institute where we bring all the 40 largest districts in the country together and we have these kinds of discussions. But I think you will find out in Dallas, Texas, it is working very well as well. Los Angeles is doing a really good job.

There are really good role models I think that we could put out there. There is also a website that USDA holds through the National Ag Library called healthy meals. All these states like Mississippi that are doing these really great things that people can use because they were produced by state and federal dollars, they are all on those websites.

Kansas is another one that does phenomenal work and was way ahead of the game where all of those resources are available to everyone free of charge, menus, ordering lists, how to purchase, procurement rules. All that kind of stuff is available if people know it is out there.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Dr. Wilson.

Ms. Wiggins, I would like to ask you a question. My wife and I about eight or nine months ago moved into the city of Cleveland. The zip code we live in actually had the highest rates for three years running a few years ago, not in the last couple of years, had the highest rates of foreclosure of any ZIP code in the United States. We know the challenges in urban areas and your city and my city.

We have also seen, Cleveland is ranked in the top two or three of any cities, of all cities in the country in terms of urban gardening. I was specifically interested in your comments that what you have done with urban gardening.

Talk more about that and what the city school food system has done with using community gardens and using urban gardening generally. Translate this into what we can do in Cleveland and others of us can do around the country in urban gardening, selling directly to the schools.

Ms. WIGGINS. Thank you for the question.

One of the things that has been most positive, we at the Detroit Public Schools did not try to do it by ourselves. I reached out to numerous community partners. One of my best partners is the Detroit Eastern Market, who has access to farmers. I also reached out to Michigan State University, the best agricultural college in the country,

Chairwoman STABENOW. I would agree with that.

Ms. WIGGINS. I thought you would.

Through their extension, they provide me with applied agriculturalists and farmers. They provide me with information. Through that kind of collaboration, we started to plan. We created something called the Detroit School Garden Collaborative. I reached out to all the partners in the city that was engaged in that, taught our children to plan, educated our teachers. That has been fundamentally important to us is educating the teachers.

We also created youth garden leaders, youth garden ambassador so that those products could be taken care of as they grow the gardens. When we develop our gardens, we insisted that three garden beds be used for items to go into the school meals program.

My director of operations, Teresa Romeris, created something called the stop lights outlet where our kids actually plant zucchini, yellow squash and tomatoes. They learned doing that process. They go out and they harvest those things.

You wonder how kids, can reduce plate waste, you get them engaged in it. When the kids bring it in, although you cannot feed the whole school, you can feed the class it came from. That information then is shown to other kids and there is a sense of pride.

One of our biggest source of pride in Detroit Public Schools is that we now have a local restaurant who menus the Detroit Public Schools stoplight salad. The message is getting out and we are getting support.

I worked with Cleveland, visited it several times to look at their gardening program. But it is a commitment to new nutrition standards that made me realize that it was going to be through nutrition education, community involvement, student involvement that we were going to make this work and that is why I see the new standards as a value proposition for our Nation.

All that stuff supports what we are trying to do to stem childhood obesity.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thanks very much.

Before proceeding, Senator Leahy asked to put a statement in the record which we will do without objection and a copy of his book that was put together by Vermont schools working with USDA, the new school cuisine.

[The following information can be found on page 46 in the appendix.]

Chairwoman STABENOW. He reminded us for members who were not here when we started that the pumpkin squares that you have in front of you come from Vermont, and we also thank Senator Casey for the mushroom meat, meatballs, and the apples and so on. We are eating well today.

We will now turn to Senator Johanns and then Senator Donnelly.

Senator JOHANNS. Madam Chair, thank you and thank you for holding this hearing.

Let me, if I might, start with you, Ms. Bauscher. I found your testimony interesting and, I think, very candid and honest about the challenges you are facing.

Like probably every member in the United States Senate, I visit a lot of schools. We all do. It is always a great place to get an honest assessment of things, as you know.

When I visit schools and I open it up to questions, these days, over the last few years as a matter of fact, one of the common criticisms I hear from kids relates to the school lunch program. It may be about choices. It may be about food that they do not want to eat. It may be about they are not getting enough to eat. That sort of thing.

It seems to me that whatever we do with all of our good intentions, if we cannot sell it to kids, we are fooling ourselves because it will go on their plate and then it will go to the trash bin.

Here is what I worry about, I worry that we have thrown so much at schools that we are going to get to a point where participation goes down. Schools will back away from the program. Kids will back away from the program, and at the end of the day what we end up with is the poor kids eating the school lunch program because it is free and reduced and the rest of the kids who have the resources from home to do something else are going to do something else.

Am I missing something here? Am I off base?

Ms. BAUSCHER. You have just summarized many of the concerns that our members across the country have expressed. We want school meals to be appealing to all students. We have to feed all students because we do not want those students eligible for free and reduced meals to have any stigma attached to receiving meals.

As I mentioned, members across the country have worked very hard. Many of us, I am with Betti, I was an early adopter with Jessica Shelly in Cincinnati. I made changes early and often. I cultivated community partners.

But that is still a challenge to assure that our meals are appealing to all students. That is why I think some flexibility is important in assuring that students to continue to come to the cafeteria. We will continue to encourage them to make healthy choices and make the healthy choice the easy choice for them. But operators need a little bit of flexibility in order to assure that all of their students participate in the program.

Senator JOHANNS. As each witness was testifying today, it just occurred to me how different the places are that you come from. There is nothing like Detroit in my State. I say that just simply because it is a bigger city. I mean it is just kind of hard to describe. Detroit is not like many of the communities I visit.

Ms. Wiggins, would you agree that one of the things that we might be missing is the lack of flexibility between a Detroit and a Kearney, Nebraska?

Ms. WIGGINS. Sir, I do understand your question. But also as the former food service director in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where there was 3 percent free and reduced, my parents had the ability to have us, through either organization or community engagement, to put items on the tray.

I think what you are missing, please understand that school meals is not a welfare program. It provides direct benefits to support education for all children.

Now, those pay children that you are worried about, I also have pay children but those are the children of the working poor, the near poor, and the soon to be poor that bring in the junk food to the cafeteria. Those kids whose parents cannot afford to give them money every day are the kids with their heads down on the cafeteria table and missing lunch.

Those are the kids now that I have been able to embrace in CEP or community eligibility. Community eligibility allowed me to bring more revenue into my program so that I could support the new nutrition standards.

I had a per capita spending, because I am also a businessperson, I had a per capita spending of $1.98 per kid. With CEP my participation went up 16 percent and I had more money available to me.

Now, my per capita spending is around three dollars because that is the flat reimbursement.

We have to be savvy about what we do. In Ann Arbor, yes, I had to make food that was more a peeling. But it did not cause me any difficulty. In Detroit, I do not know if you heard my testimony, I am not concerned about the kids on the urban street corners. We do a real good job in taking care of them.

I am concerned about the kids in Southfield where the poverty rate is about 40 percent. I am concerned about those kids. That is the reason we need to make sure that you be authorized this program so we can take care all of the children.

Detroit is not any unique and different than the number of poor children in Appalachia, West Virginia, or Kentucky or out West on the Native American reservations. They are small Detroits and they had the same problems. Mine is just magnified because I am bigger.

But the programs and legislation that is before you right now, the real authorization is not only a good start, it is a necessary start so we can talk about feeding all children.

Senator JOHANNS. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much.

Senator Donnelly.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Wiggins, when you have conferences, when all of you have conferences, one of the things that has bothered me so much is the dramatic increase in type II diabetes that we see.

Is that a subject that comes up at your conferences as to how your efforts can help to stem the tide on that.

Ms. WIGGINS. Senator, I appreciate that question. That is a subject that comes up in our district and was one of the reasons through the USDA wellness policy we have been able to implement new mill standards. When you see a six-year-old with type II diabetes or people grossly overweight, we know that we have to do something.

Our educational leaders are just as concerned as I am as a nutritional leader and they support these new nutrition standards. It is not just confined to our school lunch ladies. It is really an issue that we all need to be concerned about.

Senator DONNELLY. I would think that is a subject that as you look at it, the direct action of your work can change the impact on the health of our children.

Ms. WIGGINS. Well, I agree with you, I mean I got truly interested when the Secretary of the Army came before this body and talked about how our kids were so grossly obese and I was shaking my head.

Then that motivated me more than ever to work hard to implement the new nutrition standards. You have to be a savvy food service director. You have got to use all the tools. USDA, this government provides us with a lot of tools. 10 percent of my food comes from USDA commodities.

Senator DONNELLY. My friend, Senator Heitkamp, who is here, had to go preside over the Senate. One of the concerns she has is about equipment needs, that as you look at the equipment you have and the equipment that you are going to need, are there

things that will help you in that process? I see Dr. Wilson shaking your head.

Are there things we can do to help with equipment needs?

Dr. WILSON. Well, I will just very briefly tell you in what we do across the country as well as in the training even with equipment and how to use different equipment that definitely is an issue. There are a lot of infrastructures in schools that do not have coolers and freezers and schools that were built without kitchens.

As people begin to progress into this different sort of mode in feeding children in our school systems, updating equipment, getting new equipment is definitely a need out there. We used to have equipment grants years ago when I first started in the business and it was wonderful because you could get some really nice pieces of equipment. The equipment now can be universal. You can use it to steam, bake, roast, all in one piece of equipment. That is definitely a need in the country.

Senator DONNELLY. Mr. Clements, one of the things you do is try to leverage the purchasing power of smaller districts as well and try to get the best deal for everybody.

How do you bring in your local farming groups? I am from Indiana and I think one of the most, one of the proudest moments for our farmers is when they see their products used in their town to serve meals to their kid.

How do you bring that together? Do you need to put our local farmers in like purchasing groups or, I mean, groups that you buy from? What makes it easy for you to try to bring in as local as possible?

Mr. CLEMENTS. We have had some biggest success with local farmers. We were very happy with that. We have relied very strongly on the Mississippi Department of Agriculture to connect us with local farmers and then to use the Department of Defense program to actually purchase through the DOD program to purchase from them.

There are some challenges there. We have many small farmers who struggle sometimes with the cost of certifications to show that their food is safe for a verbal population.

We have very few large farmers who can meet those requirements very easily. The irony of it has been, as we have seen farmers markets increase in Mississippi, it has actually pulled programs away from the school lunch program because often they can get a better price there. It is a struggle every year to find the products that will come in that we can afford on the program with our limited reimbursement but our State Ag department has been very helpful with that.

Senator DONNELLY. Well, I would think within the confines obviously of safety, the more options we also provide our Ag community with farmers markets, other places that they can send their produce to. As I said, in talking with farmers one of their great moments of pride is when they see their own stuff in their own high school or their own middle school making their own kids safe and healthy.

Thank you all for your efforts on this and we really appreciate it to.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much.

At this point, I am asking Senator Gillibrand to take over as chair. I need to go to the floor to speak on a bill we are going to be voting on in a moment. I will vote and then come right back.

At this point we have Senator Hoeven who is next and I will turn the chair over to Senator Gillibrand.

So thank you.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

This Committee is working on reauthorization of the Healthy School Lunch Program. We all want our kids to be healthy and have nutritious meals, but there is a disagreement on the flexibility that is needed for the school lunch program.

I want to use the whole-grain requirements as an example. July 1, the new requirement kicked, and that provides that for all cereal grain foods that are served, they have to be 100 percent whole-grain products. We are talking all bread products, crackers, pizza crust, taco shells, anything you could think of that is made with grains. It has to be 100 percent.

Ms. Bauscher, I am going to start with you. Again, I mean, you represent the 55,000 school nutritionists that actually have to deliver this program on the ground, not somebody here in Washington, DC, that can say in a theoretical world here is the perfect and that is what we want but somebody that has to deliver it every day to those children and deliver something that they will eat.

So again, address the flexibility issue. Then I am going to come back and I have a question for each one of our panelists.

Ms. BAUSCHER. Related to the whole-grain requirement, you are right, that effective July 1, 100 percent of our grains have to be whole-grain rich meaning that they are at least 51 percent whole-grain.

All of us are there at 50 percent, and many of us are beyond that. I will be at 100 percent, although there are some new items that my students will be trying this semester and I hope that they like them.

Across the country, there seems to be that single item in most regions that some school food authorities have had a difficult time finding a product that is acceptable to their kids. Tortillas in the Southwest. Biscuits and grits in the South. Bagels in the Northeast.

So again, I think most districts would not have any trouble probably even getting the 90 percent if there was at least an exemption for that culturally significant bread grain item that they like.

Again, our manufacturers have stepped up and really produced some great items. Pasta, for example, whole-grain pasta has not been a problem in my district. My kids are coming around on the biscuits finally. But again, school food service directors have a hard time sometimes accessing the products that their students like through their current distribution.

Senator HOEVEN. All right. What I want to ask each of the panelists. Is it not reasonable then to allow some of these kinds of exemptions and flexibility, for example, for the whole grains requirement?

If your answer is, no, if you are not willing to allow us to put in that kind of flexibility in the law, then are you going to commit

to make sure that you have 100 percent whole-grain products for every single lunch you have for the next year and beyond?

I would like to start with Ms. Wiggins.

Ms. WIGGINS. Well, sir, as a card-carrying member of the School Attrition Association and having my president here still makes me very proud. One of the things that you have not talked about and some of the people that maybe you should have at this table are the manufacturers who have worked very hard in formulating those whole-grain products. Over the last three years they did like me. They did not wait. They started right away.

When I talked to them at the school show last week, one of the things they said is that they support us maintaining these standards because if they have to wait and go back and reformulate that product again or change the standard again, it is going to cost me money.

Yes, I am committed to it. I have the whole-grain pasta and the biscuits because even though I am from Detroit, we have that southern feeling in Detroit. We eat all of those kind of products.

Senator HOEVEN. You think it is reasonable and 100 percent of all grain products that you have for all your lunches for the next year will meet that requirement. I just want to know.

Ms. WIGGINS. The answer is yes.

Senator HOEVEN. There should be no flexibility.

Ms. WIGGINS. Sir, flexibility is all relative sometimes. The USDA is very flexible.

Senator HOEVEN. I am just asking, what about an exception right here for a school that is having trouble meeting that requirement should there not be some flexibility to allow them to say, look, we cannot get the whole-grain pasta so we may not be able to serve a whole-grain product 100 percent of the time.

Should we have that flexibility or not in the program? I am using that as a specific example. I want to give everyone a chance to answer it. I have got to ask for kind of a short response.

Ms. WIGGINS. Okay. If it is reasonable, yes, sir.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you.

Mr. CLEMENTS. Speaking for our bid service administrators, we have just had our annual conference for MDE and speaking also from the person collective side, we would be happy to see some flexibility there.

I think a good example is we had an official from USDA with us recently telling us about this great whole-grain biscuit they had and they later realized that, oops, it was actually a carryover from last year. It was really the white biscuits.

While we do have an acceptable product on our bid, we worry about participation next year because it just does not have the same taste, texture, feel that the regular white products do. We would support some flexibilities, yes, sir.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you.

Ms. Bauscher, I think you already answered affirmatively so unless you had something else.

Dr. Wilson.

Dr. WILSON. I think there is some miscommunication because we just got information from USDA for our training that whole-grain

rich means it is 50 percent whole-grain and the rest is enriched and there is this information out there——

Senator HOEVEN. But 100 percent of what you serve has to be at least at that threshold. I think we are clear on that.

Dr. WILSON. Yes.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you.

Dr. WILSON. There is pasta flexibility right now. The memo did go out. There is flexibility on pasta.

Senator HOEVEN. Only for pasta?

Dr. WILSON. Correct. There is also the ability for you, for instance, I am from Wisconsin but I live in Mississippi. They always tell me, Katie, you better fix that grit thing because we do not want to serve whole-grain grits.

There is the ability to use grits in the program but are not counted toward the green product.

Senator HOEVEN. You think there should be flexibility or you should have a rule, a 100 percent and that is it? That is what I am driving at, Doctor.

Dr. WILSON. From the scientific standpoint and from the nutritional standpoint, I would say we need to go with 100 percent whole grains.

Senator HOEVEN. No exceptions?

Dr. WILSON. Right.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, doctor.

Dr. WILSON. Thank you.

Senator HOEVEN. Doctor, then you would also commit to have a 100 percent grain products at least 50 percent whole-grains in all your lunches no matter where you go, no matter where you eat, no matter what restaurant for the next year and you do not see that as a hardship in any way, shape or form?

Dr. WILSON. No.

Senator HOEVEN. Because you believe there should be no exceptions.

Dr. WILSON. I was doing it in Wisconsin four years ago. There were whole-grain products then.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Doctor.

Mr. Muir.

Mr. MUIR. This is a little bit out of my area of expertise, which is fresh fruits and vegetables. However, I do have some experience here in that several of my school districts came to me two years ago and said we cannot find whole-grain flour through our normal grocery suppliers. Will you find it for us?

We found it for them and deliver it to those school districts now and have been for two school years. They are proactive and after it.

We look at these standards perhaps from the wrong perspective that they are a maximum. These standards are really the minimum requirement that we all should be meeting if we want to solve the obesity problem. Therefore, I think we ought to maintain the standard and we need to redouble our efforts to work with those school districts that are struggling with the whole grains.

Senator HOEVEN. Allow reasonable exceptions or not?

Mr. MUIR. I would say let us stay the course.

Senator HOEVEN. So no exceptions?

Mr. MUIR. No exceptions.

Senator HOEVEN. All right. Thank you, Mr. Muir, and again, you feel that you could accomplish the same thing and will over the next year. 100 percent of the grain products you eat will be at least 50 percent whole grains.

Mr. MUIR. Yes.

Senator HOEVEN. Okay. Thank you.

Thanks to all the panelists. I appreciate you being here.

Senator GILLIBRAND. [Presiding] Thank you.

Thank you, Ranking Member Cochran, for hosting this hearing.

I am really worried about the obesity epidemic. I am really worried about it. The food we serve to the 31 million students who participate in school lunch programs is an important investment in the future of our country. I think this discussion is invaluable.

Obesity statistics are staggering. One in three kids in our country are now obese or overweight. Just think about that for a minute. One in three kids. That is an extraordinarily high number. We have schools, in preschools and kindergartens in New York State where 20 percent of the children entering kindergarten are obese.

We have an issue about lack of information, lack of understanding, lack of nutrition standards, access to healthy foods that we have talked about in this Committee for a while. I think that is why this debate is so important.

According to the American Heart Association, obesity in adolescents costs our country $254 billion a year. $208 billion is lost in productivity, $46 billion in direct medical costs.

We also have staggering hunger in our country. One in five kids lives in households that struggle to put food on the table. A recent survey shows that 73 percent of teachers report having students coming to school hungry.

For these kids the hot meal they get at school might be the only food they eat that day. We need to invest in these kids by investing in the food they eat. The $2.92 that we currently invest in these free school meals is not enough. After labor and utility costs are paid, only about a dollar is invested in actual food.

The Institute of medicine has reported that in order for these school lunches to be nutritious, including adequate fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy and whole grains we need to invest an additional $.35 per meal. I am hoping that the members of this Committee will join me in fighting for this.

I wish Senator Hoeven did not leave. Of course, kids like non-whole grains. Yes, that is what they prefer. They like sugar even more. If you give your child a choice, would you like to have sugar for lunch or would you like to have fruit and vegetables, they are going to pick sugar. It is what they like. Their taste buds loved it.

But we have to be the adults in the room. You just do not give kids the foods they want. You have to give them and teach them how to eat well for their whole lives and that takes leadership, it takes determination and it takes creativity.

I love the fact that you told your school district, pick three colors every day. My children when I was teaching them about nutrition when they were four, five, and six, that is how we did it. How many colors can you put on your plate? They loved that.

Because I fed my children steamed vegetables as children, they only like steamed vegetables. They do not want butter on it. They do not want cream. They do not want cheese on it. They want steamed vegetables.

They have been eating fruit at every meal since they were babies. My kids as a consequence because they are given, introduced healthy foods at every meal, they prefer healthy foods.

For a lot of these kids, they are not getting healthy foods at home. They are getting refined carbohydrates at every meal. A typical meal will be a burger and fries. Of course, they prefer burger and fries. That is what they have been fed since they were little.

We have to do more. I feel that, yes, to Senator Hoeven, it is easy to have flexibility. People like the grits like they like the grits that they have had since they were a kid. But let us not serve refined foods at lunch. Let us actually push them to eat something healthy that makes them healthy and reach their full potential.

When a kid is obese, he does not reach his full potential. He cannot concentrate in class. He is often made fun of. He has low self-esteem. He does not reach his full potential. She does not reach her full potential.

I am grateful that all of you have thought outside the box figuring out how to solve these problems, meet nutrition standards. I do not want to back off these nutrition standards. Let us figure it out. We can figure it out.

I am worried about SNA's goal to roll back requirements for schools to serve healthier foods.

Ms. Bauscher, is that a true statement, is that their goal?

Ms. BAUSCHER. Our goal is not to roll back the requirements. Again, we fully support the increased quantities and varieties of fruits and vegetables that have to be offered to our students and many of us, all of us are encouraging students to select fruits and vegetables by preparing them in attractive ways and making a wide variety of available.

We also support at least 50 percent of the grains being whole-grain or maybe somewhere in between 50 and 100. But again you said it. Our students are not seeing some of these foods outside of school.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Correct.

Ms. BAUSCHER. We also have students that go through the line that take it because they have to and then do not eat it. If they do not eat, they are going to go home and maybe not have a meal and still be hungry.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Kids will eat if they are hungry. I do not agree, if my son got to choose his lunch, he would choose candy and cookies. He would choose it. That is what he would choose. But by the time it is lunch time, he is so hungry he will eat what I put on his plate.

I do not agree that kids who are hungry do not eat. I do not agree. A hungry kid will take an apple. A hungry kid will take some pasta, will take some vegetables. Just because it is not their favorite or tastes funny, they are going to eat it. If you offer low-quality food, they will prefer low-quality food. It tastes better. Sugar, salt tastes great.

Ms. BAUSCHER. We are not offering low-quality food. We are meeting the calorie requirements. We have eliminated trans fat. We are meeting the saturated fat requirements, and we are reducing the sodium.

We will be on board with the target one sodium requirements that went into effect July 1. But it is all about allowing students some time to catch up. You do not turn their taste buds around on a dime, and we are encouraging them to take healthy choices.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay. I think we need more money in this program. Do you think we need more money in this program?

Ms. BAUSCHER. Yes.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay. Good. During the last reauthorization, I supported a $.35 increase in the reimbursement rate rather than 6 percent.

Would this help all of you achieving your goals?

Mr. CLEMENTS. Yes.

Senator GILLIBRAND. All of you here, yes?

[Nodding heads in the affirmative.]

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay. I would like you to help us do that because you are the advocates. You are the experts. We have to inform Congress that $2.92 is not enough and whole foods, whole fruit, whole vegetables can be affordable as we increase access.

But I can tell you, when you have a low-quality vegetable, I mean, how many people would prefer steamed green beans over canned green beans? Everyone. There is nobody who prefers canned green beans over steamed green beans. They are 1 billion times more tasty and delicious in their whole form.

Let us focus on how we get the fresh whole fruits, whole vegetables and it costs a little more. It is cheaper to serve a chicken nugget. But if we could have roasted chicken or grilled chicken, it is more healthy.

It does cost a little bit more. I urge you to please help us achieve that goal by getting us to inform Congress how important a little bit of money, and I had a lot of other questions about equipment that I will submit for the record.

But I agree there is a grant program that we had in the past. That I would like to reinstitute. I had a bill to do exactly that. It is not a lot of money. $35 Million in grants so that school districts can apply. So they can have the equipment they need to actually serve these fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains and lean meats.

I think we can agree on that too. It is not a lot of money. If you go back to the cost, Senator Thune, you did not hear my earlier statement but the cost would be in the 200s of billions a year in missed opportunity and less performing, a huge drain on the economy. I think the small amounts of investment has enormous returns on term.

Senator Boozman.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you very much. I appreciate you all being here and appreciate the hard work. I was on the school board for seven years and I understand how difficult it is for those of you who are in the trenches.

Some of you have figured this out. We have a problem though because the vast majority of your colleagues have not figured it out

and I have visited with a bunch of people that—lunch personnel over the past year and they are very frustrated.

The things that I hear about are the waste, the expense, fear of unfunded mandate which we have already and for that to grow, and then also kids being hungry.

So again, like I said, it is great that you all have it figured out to some extent but a bunch of your colleagues have not and again are very, very frustrated.

Mr. Muir, as Ms. Bauscher mentioned in our testimony, we know the price of fruits and vegetables is subject to drought, floods, and fluctuations in transportation costs based on the growing season.

How do you cope with the variability? How do you handle the supply of fresh fruits and vegetables when they are out of season?

Mr. MUIR. We work with our school districts in trying to help them create an annual calendar of the commodities they are going to serve during certain periods of time.

We steer them away from things we already know like when a production cycle is gapping and the price of that product will be going up. On many occasions if there is a weather event with a product, a fresh fruit or vegetable and the price spikes, we immediately notify our school districts that, hey, I think we need to make a substitution here.

Under the DOD fresh program, when our prices are posted a week in advance, it is very clear that most of the school districts are savvy to that; and when they see a spike in price, they call us and they move away for a substitute product.

We are not spending $20 for something that is normally eight dollars. We try to do that with all of our school districts.

Senator BOOZMAN. Very good. I know that your firm sources fresh and specialty products from around the world for your customers. How do you work with the school food authorities to comply with the National School Lunch Act buy American provision that requires the purchase of domestically grown and processed foods to the maximum extent possible?

Mr. MUIR. Under the system that the DOD fresh has which is a complete online system that is called Favors, we are not allowed to post non-domestic items on that list. It is very regulated. It is difficult for them to make a mistake there. I think we can provide them a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables all domestic. Sometimes not all year but we can do it during the school year.

Senator BOOZMAN. Very good. Thank you.

Ms. Wiggins and whoever would like to answer. Some of you have been doing this for a while. Are you seeing any reduction in obesity in your children?

Ms. WIGGINS. Yes, you are absolutely right I have been doing it for a while. But what I also noticed, I see some better eating habits. One of the things that we also need to consider is we need to put exercise and gym and some of the other things that burn calories because calorie in, if you do not put them out you are going to get overweight.

But the better eating habits where kids, I really get impressed when my kids are opting now for a fresh apple as opposed to potato chips. We are seeing better eating habits.

Do I have any empirical evidence? No, but I can tell you this plate waste that everybody is talking about I have not experienced it that much in Detroit.

There are other things in this reauthorization of the Healthy and Hunger Free Act that is going to help us help the people who are responsible, the new training requirements.

Sir, in school districts, the level of education sophistication among the people who are delivering the program are not equal.

I have a business background. I understand. I run a small business. But when you get in these small districts, people do not have these skills and the ability to necessarily manipulate their menus to do things.

I respect in this authorization of 2010, the whole thing about education, the whole thing about equipment, the support that you gave us.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you. I have to let Senator Thune go. But again, do not misunderstand. I am very supportive of the program but we do have a problem with many of your colleagues not understanding it, being frustrated. It has got to be fixed, and I think the program has to be tweaked to make it as effective.

The comments you made, Ms. Wiggins, are excellent in the sense that the other thing that we cannot do is just to focus on this. This is not the only answer. You know, you mentioned the exercise and things like that. That has got to be a huge part of it also.

Thank you very much for being here.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Senator Thune.

Senator THUNE. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I appreciate all of you making time. Thank you for sharing your insights.

This issue is about standards. I think it is a really important issue. It is one that I think most of us hear a lot about, standards that in some cases are leading to food being not eaten, tossed aside, also standards that are creating a significant financial burden on school systems as well.

I have heard from school administrators in my State of South Dakota who tell me that the higher cost of food needed to meet the USDA standards has resulted in financial loss and even in the release of school employees just so that the school can meet its financial obligations.

As we look at this issue I think we have to remember that there is not any federal law, regulation, or policy that should be considered a gold standard and not to be changed. I think the responsibility of this Committee as we discuss the reauthorization of the child nutrition laws is to approach this important mission with open minds and with a spirit of cooperation and not be unduly influenced by the position of those who support current policies and standards and who are not open to meaningful change.

I want to direct a question, if I might, to you, Ms. Bauscher, and that has to do with an issue that is a little bit specific to my State of South Dakota but I am sure shared by others around the country, because I have heard from students, parents, school administrators, child nutrition directors, food service managers about the impact these standards are having.

But there is this particular letter that I would like to talk about and that is one I received from 200 students who tend the Pierre Learning Center in Pierre, South Dakota.

They want to be able to have traditional foods that are part of their culture served once a month in the school cafeteria but because of the inflexibility of the new nutritional standards, they are not able to do that.

My question is how can we work in this reauthorization to ensure students are receiving healthy nutritious meals while at the same time allowing flexibility to meet these types of requests. I would say especially in areas in Indian country and areas that I represent and other members as well represent around the country.

Ms. BAUSCHER. Well, in school districts around the country, we are increasingly serving a very diverse student population. In my own district, there are over 120 languages spoken. The importance of their own eating heritage is very important for them and we look for ways to incorporate those foods.

Again, I would be hopeful that during the 2015 reauthorization we would also look at that and include reasonable flexibility that would allow students to enjoy the foods of their culture in the school meal program.

Senator THUNE. Thank you. Dr. Wilson, do you believe schools are getting consistent and adequate amounts and types of technical assistance in order to successfully implement and meet the current requirements?

Dr. WILSON. Well, I think we are just beginning with technical assistance. Like I said, the resources have been out there for a long time.

I think what has happened is we probably put the cart before the horse because, as Ms. Wiggins mentioned, that in some states there is absolutely no requirement for your educational level to run a school nutrition program.

In some states, it is just up to the local district who should be running the program irregardless of the size of the program. I know of some districts that are really in trouble but part of the problem is not that they do not want to it is that the person leading the program is not able to.

The whole issue of professional standards is really, really important because you can make all the rules you want; but if you do not understand how to do them, then that does not help.

But helping with professional standards and having people, and it is too bad we have to require it but obviously in some districts they do not do it. I know that I have worked in a very small rural district, only 1700 kids.

Back in 1990, they were throwing away 18 gallons of milk a day in the elementary school. We decided to do something about that and to be proactive. It was not because of the kind of food we were serving. It was the milk they were dumping in a bucket to throw away, and that was back in the early 1990s. So that is nothing new.

There has got to be proactive ways to deal with food waste and find out why is it being wasted. We switched in our district and we did recess before lunch. It had a huge impact on food waste.

Huge. Kids were not worried about whether they were going to go out and get the soccer ball or not.

I think there are lots of anecdotal things going around as to the blame as to why things are happening in the school lunch program, but I do not think we have done any good digging as to what really is occurring.

As far as professional standards is concerned, we do need to have an opportunity for people to be educated. Many people say, well, the small districts cannot do it.

Well, in the nursing home situation in this country, you are required to have a registered dietitian oversee your program. Now, I am not saying every school district needs a registered dietitian. But the very small nursing homes in every rural county in this country have to have somebody that comes in, either once a week or once every other week that does some oversight for them, helps them with menu planning, helps them with purchasing.

Those are the kinds of models that are working very well for nursing homes. There is a way. In my district of 1700, we increased the participation. We put a fund balance in place. My superintendent loved it because of the things that we did, and one of the things that was back in the 1990s was putting better standards in place because I come from a nutrition background.

It is doable, but we are just beginning this change and I think it is going to take up few years for this to really see the outcome of us moving forward with this.

Senator THUNE. Quickly, Ms. Wiggins, anything to add to that?

Ms. WIGGINS. I am very sensitive to ethnic preferences among children. I am from Detroit; and contrary to popular belief, I have a large Middle Eastern, I have a large Hispanic, and a few Lithuanians here and there but African-Americans as well.

We do serve ethnic foods. But you cannot serve them healthy. I will just give you an example. Black people really love collard greens and a lot of fat. But now we have changed it since we knew how much it impacted our health, thanks to diabetes and overweight, that now we can enjoy, my kids on soul day, we have black-eyed peas, collard greens, sweet potatoes, and corn bread but they are all within the guidelines of the USDA.

It is not like mom's but it is an awareness that food can be eaten.

Senator THUNE. Good. Thank you.

Madame Chairman, I guess we have a vote on so thank you and thanks to all of you for being here.

Chairwoman STABENOW. [Presiding] Thank you very much.

I appreciate Senator Gillibrand chairing the meeting while I did, in fact, go speak and vote. I know we have Senator Klobuchar coming back wanting to ask some questions. I believe Senator Gillibrand wants to ask a second round as well.

Let me proceed. There are so many different pieces to this and we need all of your input and help this week to move forward in resolving challenges and supporting schools and making sure that children get what they need.

I mentioned in the first round but did not have a chance to get into it, Ms. Bauscher, the concern that I have heard from a lot of food service directors about the amount of time children have to eat.

In fact, I have heard from students that by the time they get to the line, they have five minutes or whatever so they take a couple of bites and the food goes in the trash because they do not have enough time.

I know this gets into a broader question of the school districts and how we defined lunch and so on. But I wonder if you could tell us a little bit more about this issue of time and the impact on it and whether or not SNA is engaging school boards or local leaders to find solutions to this?

Ms. BAUSCHER. Time to eat school lunch is a serious concern. In my own district as school administrators are pressured to increase test scores, they shave minutes off of the school lunch period in order to increase the instructional time.

Again, the staff at each location is based on the number of meals served at that location. I do not just have the ability to add two or three people so I can increase the points of service and serves them quickly.

We are looking at ways that we can increase the number of students we serve and decrease the amount of time that they spend in mind. It is an issue that we have discussed in the association and that we do address in conferences and webinars and other types of material.

But it is really a decision we can have some influence on and try to educate school administrators about the importance of time to eat lunch, but an area, of course, over which we have no immediate impact.

Chairwoman STABENOW. I appreciate that. We would like very much to work with you on options. I know there is some desire or some areas that have done or are talking about pilots where children are even eating breakfast in the classroom, other options and so on.

We have some things that hopefully we can do to help support you and the tools that relate to that because I think that really is a very important issue for students.

Also let me just ask you, because we hear so many different things depending on the school, depending on the state and so on. I know in Kentucky, your home State, that Kentucky was nearly 100 percent compliant with all these standards last year. I want to congratulate you as being an early adapter in your school and the work that you have done.

When we look across a state like Kentucky with a lot of rural communities and so on we see Jack Miniard in Harlan County or Mary Koon in Hardin County or Lisa Simms in Daviess County talking about their successes in influencing the standards and they have indicated they do not see challenges or would not ask for a waiver and so on.

Yet we hear different things in different schools about what is happening. I am wondering what is different in these schools from other schools that we are hearing about and how do we help the schools that are having challenges but also recognizing the schools that are saying they are moving ahead?

Ms. BAUSCHER. A lot of it comes down to the support staff in the school nutrition program. I am very fortunate that I have a number

of people on my staff that are assigned specific duties related to our school meal program.

I can tell you that since the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act went into effect, I have had to take one key position, the coordinator of food procurement and menu planning and actually split that into two positions.

I think Mr. Clements alluded to the complexity of the requirements. So that I have one person who now concentrates on food procurement and writing the specifications and assuring that students have an opportunity to sample new product. I have another person that works on the menu planning and does all of that and takes care of special dietary needs.

That points to the complexity of some of this and I think more districts are better equipped to handle that. Katie alluded to the fact that not all school nutrition directors may be equipped with the skills necessary to handle the many changes that have occurred and the complexity of those changes.

I will tell you a story. I attended required food service director training in Frankfurt not long ago. Small groups, and there was a new director there. He has been a school food service director just two years and he formerly worked at the State Department and he told us, I am so overwhelmed because he is trying to do everything himself. I focus on one thing this year and I will focus on another thing next year.

Again, people are feeling overwhelmed in terms of trying to handle all of the changes because there have been a lot of changes in a relatively short period of time for many of us.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you. It sounds like it would be helpful if we could make sure that you have the resources you need as well so you were not having to pick.

Finally, and then I will turn it over to Senator Klobuchar. Let me just ask, Mr. Clements, and again congratulations on what you have been doing in Mississippi, again, very different than Detroit in Kentucky and Utah, difference, Wisconsin certainly.

But we are seeing positive things being addressed. I know that Mississippi has seen a decline in childhood obesity and congratulations because I know that your work on healthier school meals has really made a difference in children's lives, literally them living longer. We should feel very good about that.

You have implemented the nutrition standards for competitive foods well before the national policies were developed. I wonder if you could talk about the successes and challenges you have had on the state competitive food standards and the health benefits that you have seen as a result of the changes.

Mr. CLEMENTS. We have been very fortunate in Mississippi in many respects. We have a legislature and a State Board of Education who are both very cognizant of the challenges that we have with obesity in particular in our State.

As far back as the 1980s, they implemented an aggressive competitive food rule policy, nothing could be sold on school an hour before any meal service. That was designed to protect the school lunch program and the school breakfast program.

Beyond that, we do not have what most schools have as far a al carte sales. Students must pick up a complete reimbursement meal

to purchase any extra foods. Some of those pieces have been in place for many years.

Then really in 2007 our State legislature and our State Board of Education addressed competitive foods again. We put in very stringent vending policies that actually are closely aligned to the new Smart Snacks rules.

Our schools did see some loss of revenue there but we have also seen some very good things going on with vending. We have seen very good compliance. It took them a little while to get on board. There was a transition period but we have been very fortunate. Our schools have adopted those and they have accepted them greatly.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thanks very much.

Senator Klobuchar.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you. I am sorry I had something else this morning and I really appreciate that the hearing is still going on.

I think this is something that is really important to all of us. I know it is something you are passionate about. It is something we care a lot about in our State and I supported the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act in 2010 when it passed on a bipartisan basis to overwhelming support.

Our schools are a critical partner in this effort and we have made some progress. We have not been able to say that for a few years but we have made some progress in at least stabilizing the rate of childhood obesity in part because of the reforms that have been enacted.

I think we all know that there is work to be done. We know it has been acknowledged up here that change is not easy and that preventing childhood obesity will not happen overnight.

I do not think we should be rolling back or postponing the standards right now but I think it is always good to hear what people have to say. Also coming from an Ag state and heading to my farm fest at the beginning of August here, I wanted to talk a little bit about the issue which I know the has been involved in all of purchasing local and regional Ag products for school meal programs, the Farm to School Program.

I think it is a good bridge between our Nation's farmers and our children. According to the USDA Farm to School census data, Minnesota school districts support spending 12 percent of their school food budgets on local products.

Could you provide maybe, Ms. Wiggins, some insight into how you see this practice as a long-term strategy to support kids and also the agriculture community?

Ms. WIGGINS. I am happy to report the Detroit Public Schools spent 22 and a half percent of our produce dollars on Michigan-grown produce.

I think that long-term strategy means that we have to develop some supply chain. A little rural school, I have to tell my story. I am from a little farming town in Michigan, called Whittaker. I went there for a meeting and I know the local farmers.

They said, well, Betti, you are in Detroit now. I want to get my food into your schools and I said, no, I cannot. Why? I need one school I said I got 131.

The way that we handle, so I had to disappoint people I grew up with. But the way that we handle getting fresh fruits and vegetables into our school at the local level is we are going to have to develop some supply chains. We are going to have to develop some cooperatives.

One of the things that the State of Michigan does when you talk about how we can help one another, we have something called an alternate agreement whereby I can provide services to small school districts, one and two that do not have the capability or the education or the equipment or even the time that I provide my services and I put those districts in with the Detroit Public Schools.

When the Detroit Public School kids get that $.14 apple that our Senator is always proud to talk about, if those small schools were not with me, that Apple would cost them $.40. The ability to collaborate and cooperate is what is going to extend this program and allow us to add those important products.

Senator Klobuchar, I just laugh. St. Paul, the director of St. Paul and the director of Minneapolis yesterday that we were in a meeting trying to form a collaborative so that we could create a larger market basket so that we could go out on the market and appear more attractive.

Manufacturers, they are not giving us food, and I do not have a problem with that. But if what we can do as a collaborative will ensure that my farmers in Michigan and Minnesota do not have to plow under products that my kids could eat, that we consider ourselves successful.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Again one other thing that we did, or our agriculture extension service at the University of Minnesota did a study and it did not surprise me because we have seen this with global products in general.

It is why our Red Wing shoes is doing great. People are really interested in being part of something that is local. What we found in the study at the University of Minnesota that there was a 3–16 percent increase in school meal participation when there was a farm to school program because I think and I know there has been supply chain issues.

I have heard about some of this but I do think we have to remember if we can work this out it actually not only is good for the kids it actually increases their interests and their family's interest in being part of this because they see it as part of the local community.

I will just ask one more question here with my time here of you, Ms. Bauscher. In your testimony and I know here earlier you talked about school districts that have had trouble finding acceptable foods that can meet the new whole-grain rich standards.

How many schools have taken advantage of a two-year flexibility provided by USDA on whole grains rich food in order to allow time for the industry to develop workable products?

Ms. BAUSCHER. I do not have an answer to that question. I know in talking to colleagues from around the country as recently as last week in Boston, I have talked to districts who intend to apply for the waiver and I have talked to districts that do not have a need for the waiver, including my own.

Sometimes it can be districts that are adjacent to one another. I do not know how many have actually applied.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Okay. That would be helpful to know because there is that possibility out there because I think people try to be as flexible as possible.

Mr. Clements, just one more question. Outside of the new standards, how do state agencies and schools determine what products will be included in the vending machines and the a la carte lines?

I worked very hard on his vending machine issue. I care a lot about it. After having my daughter in public school her whole life and watching what was in some of the vending machines that some of the kids who were in after-school programs like she was and what they were eating. What methods of evaluation have been used in the vending machines for the Smart Snacks Program?

Mr. CLEMENTS. Again, back to 2007, we had policies in the State that were very similar to the new smart snacks. We at the state agency provide that service to the school food service authorities in that they can send us products. We make the evaluation for them and they do not have to have any technical skills, so to speak.

We have that expertise at our office. We publish the list. If they have individual products, they can send us the information. We get it back to them. Of course, there are all online calculators now. If they want to go through, they can use those. We encourage that if they would like to but we are happy to provide that service to all of our schools.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. All right. Thank you very much.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much, Senator Klobuchar.

Again, thank you for presiding over the Committee today, Senator Gillibrand.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, and thank you again for holding this hearing.

I think this is a vital issue because of the obesity rates in children and how important it is for their health and well-being to feed them good foods.

I want to continue a little bit along the lines that Senator Klobuchar started. What we have done, this is for Mr. Phil Muir. Food hubs are increasingly popular across New York State and vary from not-for-profits working to bring local foods to under served areas to large not-for-profits serving hundreds of businesses and institutions.

For example, New York City wholesale green market as well as for-profit businesses improving access through direct sales to individuals. My team works very closely with different food hub organizations and has helped to secure grants, loans, and other services that have advanced the hub's mission.

Could you speak to the importance of food hubs and how it ties the school nutrition in the work that you do?

Mr. MUIR. Food hubs—an excellent question. Food hubs are playing an integral role in getting locally grown produce to schools and other end users.

The big issue, of course, is that a lot of these local growers are what would be known as a micro-grower and not commercial. So therefore, they do not have the means of distribution, et cetera.

The food hubs play a critical role in getting the produce from the farm to the end users.

In addition to nonprofit food hubs, sometimes they also have some challenges in distribution and coldchain, et cetera. Where we do not have a successful nonprofit in our market, food hub, but we have stepped in as a distributor to act as the local food hub.

In working with our school districts, we can choose local growers or they can choose local growers themselves and then we act, they deliver to us and then we deliver out to the numerous schools rather than having a farmer in his pickup truck or whatever trying to deliver to 40 schools all in one day.

They are an integral part of the success of the local food program and the local farm to school program, so the funding and the processes to assist those food hubs is important.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Do you have any ideas for the Committee on how we can expand that, because—Amy has just left—but if some of her challenges is actually getting access to the fresh whole foods, fruits and vegetables from her local farmers, what are some policy ideas you could offer that we could expand food hubs?

You know, we try to use the program as aggressively as we can in supporting grant applications and getting access to capital. But do you have any thoughts about how to expand the program?

Mr. MUIR. I do not specifically. I know that it is a big challenge and we need to continue to work on that. We also have to keep in perspective that although local foods is a good way to go, it cannot solve all of our problems.

We still have to rely on the commercial sector, the commercial farms who can produce large quantities of product to supply our schools and other sources. For instance, if a large school district would go to a small grower and say we want to use your produce, they could wipe out his whole crop in one day.

We have to put that in perspective. But I think we continue to work with the food hubs, working with USDA, the grant money and seeing if we can develop that system. It is a whole new distribution system that is new to all of us. It will take time to develop.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Yes, but it really works. When it gets implemented, it is incredible.

Similarly, this past year USDA allocated $100 million for technical assistance and administrative funds to help meet with the new nutrition standards. However, more than half of the money has been returned to the USDA. That means that states have not been utilizing all the resources that were available for them.

For example, in New York State, 46 percent of the implementation funds are not being used which equals $2.5 million.

Dr. Wilson could you speak to what you are doing in your State to leverage the USDA dollars to help provide technical assistance to schools to meet the new nutrition standards?

Dr. WILSON. Yes. First of all, The Institute is a national institute so we go nationwide and actually we are doing technical assistance in New York City right now.

Senator GILLIBRAND. That is great.

Dr. WILSON. It is coming from our budget not theirs. But that has been an issue. Now, there are ways for those states to contract

with us. We have had outside contracts from a number of states using their team nutrition money, some of their SAE funds to contract with us to do specific things in their state.

Mississippi did it. He had some foundation money from Bower Foundation. We contracted in their State and did culinary training all over their State because Scott wanted that to be done in his State.

California did the same thing where we did 10 culinary trainings all over the State just contracted to train trainers so that they could go out and train.

Those states can use that money with us very easily and get us to put our experienced trainers on the ground to help them make sure that those standards are being met and there are all different topics that we offer from hands-on to online, from culinary to financial management to use those monies.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much, and thanks to all of you. This is really an important snapshot I think of how the program is working across the country, the challenges that we face.

We want to work with all of you to continue moving forward, build on best practices, be able to support and tackle the things that we are still needing to tackle to make sure that all schools are successful because in the bottom line we are talking about something pretty important here in terms of the health of the future of the country, tackling childhood obesity and adult obesity based on the habits that we all acquire as we are children.

Certainly we know that change always is a little difficult but in this case is well worth the effort. So thank you again. We look forward to working with you on the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Program.

I would say to my colleagues that any additional questions for the record should be submitted to the Committee clerk five business days from today. That is 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday July 30 and the meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:35 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

JULY 23, 2014

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
Hearing on Meeting the Challenges of Feeding America's School Children
July 23, 2014
Statement for the Record

Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Madam Chairwoman, thank you for holding this hearing.

It's my honor today to highlight an innovative concept that has been developed by the mushroom industry for the school lunch program. It's called "blendability," and it is simply adding chopped mushrooms to meat, so students' favorite meals – burgers, tacos, sloppy joes – can be made healthier without losing taste or texture while extending volume.

Pennsylvania farms grow 62 percent of all US mushrooms and thanks to one our grower-processors, we have a sample of blended mushroom meatballs for my colleagues and our guests to try today. I commend the mushroom industry, foodservice directors and meat processors for working together to find solutions to producing healthier meals that meet the USDA guidelines and, most importantly, appeal to kids. Mushroom and meat blendability recipes work in school kitchens that cook from scratch and in pre-prepared menu choices that are available through a number of meat processors.

I'd like to note that the mushroom growers' check off program – the Mushroom Council – has an entire website dedicated to blendability resources for the school lunch program. Recipes, menu suggestions, and success stories are available as well as educational materials for teachers and students. In addition to the grower-funded promotion program, these resources were developed in part with funding from a USDA Specialty Crop Block grant delivered through the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.This concept opens another market to our domestic mushroom producers while also providing a healthy and tasty choice for our children.

A child nutrition bill protects and assists the most vulnerable of our society – pregnant women and children who are food insecure, especially in a time of economic difficulties for so many families and communities across the country. Healthy, nutritious food is critically important to the health and well-being of our children. That is why I supported the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act*. The investments that the federal government makes in programs like School Lunch

and WIC means less money that we pay in health care costs for malnourished kids who develop health problems.

Pennsylvania has about half a million children living in poverty. That's about 17% of the children in Pennsylvania. For some of these children, free or reduced-cost breakfast and lunch are the only reason that they don't spend the day hungry.

It is important to make sure that the kids who rely on federal nutrition programs get healthy, nutritious meals. The *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act* helps to ensure more eligible children receive meals, increasing the number of eligible children and increasing the nutritional value of meals. Hungry and malnourished children cannot fully participate in school. If a child can't have the benefit of a school breakfast or lunch, they can't learn. It is as simple as that. None of us could learn. None of us can function if we don't have enough to eat. If we invest in children, making sure they can learn at a very young age, they can learn more now and earn more later. We have to remain committed to these programs.

As school is out, it is also important to remember the times when children are out of school – summer, weekends, school breaks – and are going hungry.

Thank you Madam Chairwoman.

Statement of Senator Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
"Meeting the Challenges of Feeding America's School Children"
Full Committee Hearing
July 23, 2014

Madam Chairwoman, thank you for holding this hearing, which is part of the challenging process to develop strong, bipartisan legislation to reauthorize child nutrition programs.

These programs are very important to Mississippi, our nation, our agricultural producers, and vulnerable populations, including hungry children. The school lunch program was originally created as "a measure of national security, to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural commodities." The two-fold mission of these programs continues to this day.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses regarding their experiences in administering these programs that we can build upon.

I am committed to working with you, other Members of the Committee, and program stakeholders to identify and execute both major and minor changes to improve these programs and their ability to fulfill their mission. Not every program needs a major overhaul, but every federal program can benefit from increased efficiency, improved integrity, and reduction of waste.

I am receiving comments from my constituents in Mississippi who recognize the need for nutrition programs but are also concerned about federal government mandates. I think we can continue to improve nutrition programs that prevent childhood hunger and support American agriculture with added flexibility at the local levels.

Again, I appreciate you holding this hearing, and thank you to the witnesses who traveled from Mississippi and elsewhere to be here.

Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry,
Hearing on "Meeting the Challenges of Feeding America's School Children"
July 23, 2014

Thank you, Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Cochran, for holding this hearing to discuss how schools are successfully offering healthy and fresh meals to students nationwide.

Five years ago, this Committee began an effort to tackle the problem of childhood obesity by making improvements to the school lunch program. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, signed into law four years ago, has made access to healthy food a reality in our schools. The law established, for the first time, national school nutrition standards to ensure our children have healthier options available throughout the entire school day. Parents across the country now know that the snacks and foods offered to their children at school, even from the vending machine or the a la carte lunch line, are based on national standards established by USDA to ensure healthier diets.

I have heard from countless Vermont parents, teachers, school administrators, food service workers, community leaders, farmers and others about the importance of making sure every child in America has access to nutritious meals at school. They all want what's best for our children, and they all know how crucial it is that we work together to meet this goal.

In order to better connect kids with the food in their cafeteria, the law also included funding for the Farm to School Program, a provision I authored. The program offers support to farmers and local economies, while teaching kids about nutritious foods and where they come from. The program has helped schools across the country meet the new nutrition standards by offering children local, fresh produce that tastes great. And just as importantly, the program has a strong educational component, making our school cafeterias an extension of the classroom, giving students an opportunity to learn about nutrition, well-balanced meals, and even how to grow the food themselves.

In Vermont, schools have found new and innovative ways to connect children to their food. Students participate in school gardens, sustainability projects, and taste tests for new school menu items. The Burlington School Food Project created a food truck for students to run and sell healthy, local food, and each year the state hosts a "Junior Iron Chef" competition where teams of middle and high school students compete to create healthy, local dishes that inspire school meal programs.

The new standards have not come without their challenges, but even with some of the hurdles schools have faced ninety percent of schools are meeting the new meal standards. Where schools are having trouble, states and not-for-profits have stepped in to provide assistance. Through a USDA grant, Vermont created a cookbook written and tested by school cooks for school food service directors to use in meeting the new standards. The recipes include information on the specific food components that meet the meal pattern requirements, and have been extremely popular not just in schools in Vermont but nationwide. Despite the challenges,

there is agreement that changing the eating behavior of children is a worthwhile endeavor, and programs in Vermont and nationwide are seeing remarkable results.

I look forward to hearing from all our witnesses about how schools are meeting the challenge set forth in the Healthy and Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 and about how we can work to make improvements when we reauthorize the program next year.

I thank the Chairwoman again for calling us together on this important topic.

#####

Testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

Meeting the Challenges of Feeding America's School Children

Ms. Julia Bauscher, President, School Nutrition Association; Director of School and Community Nutrition Services, Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY

Wednesday, July 23 at 9:30 a.m.
328A Russell Senate Office Building

Chairman Stabenow, Ranking Member Cochran, other members of the Committee, on behalf of the 55,000 members of the School Nutrition Association (SNA), thank you for the opportunity to join with you today to discuss our shared goal of strengthening America's child nutrition programs through the reauthorization process.

I would also like to thank your staff members, Jacqlyn Schneider and Julian Baer for joining more than 6,500 school nutrition professionals last week in Boston for SNA's Annual National Conference. We appreciated the opportunity to show them how SNA members are constantly working together with USDA, food companies and other partners to improve school menus and encourage the 30 million students we feed to make healthier choices at school and at home.

School nutrition professionals know that the meals they provide are often the best meals that many children receive, and we recognize the importance of these meals to the health and academic success of America's students. That's why school nutrition directors have expanded our school breakfast options, increased summer feeding sites, launched new supper programs and are now, when feasible, taking advantage of the new Community Eligibility Provision, or CEP.

In my own district I have implemented breakfast in the classroom in 26 schools and added two mobile "Bus Stop Cafes" to serve summer meals where kids live and play. We have implemented the Child and Adult Care Food Program to provide suppers during after school enrichment activities, and will implement CEP in 95 of my 145 schools this coming school year. Implementing and expanding access to these critical school meal programs has allowed many districts to maintain a healthy bottom line.

Even before the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act became law, school nutrition professionals have worked diligently to improve the nutrition of school menus, and we support most of the new regulatory requirements. We are increasing the serving size and variety of the fruits and vegetables we offer, serving more whole grains, meeting limits on calories and unhealthy fats, while reducing sodium in our entrees and sides.

We have also gotten creative in making healthier choices more appealing to students. My program, like so many others nationwide, has steadily increased the quantity of local foods we serve, and we have chefs on staff to help make our healthy recipes more enticing. School cafeterias across the country are using student taste tests, Harvest of the Month promotions, Farm to School programs and other unique initiatives to help familiarize students with the new fruits and vegetables they can choose with school meals.

School nutrition professionals are truly committed to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act and its goal of expanding access to our healthy school meals, and that is why we are so concerned about the historic decline in student lunch participation under the regulatory requirements of the new law.

For thirty years, the National School Lunch Program has grown steadily, serving healthy lunches to more students each year. But according to USDA data, since schools began implementing the new requirements, student participation is abruptly down in 49 states. Under the new nutrition standards, more than one million fewer students choose school lunch each day, even though student enrollment in the schools that participate in the program increased by 1.2 million last year. This participation challenge thwarts our shared goal of promoting healthier diets for *all* students.

Virtually all of the students leaving the lunch program are those who can afford to bring their lunch from home or purchase it elsewhere. Nationwide, we have witnessed a nearly 15 percent decline in participation in this paid meal category. In my district paid meal participation has declined 8% each of the last two years.

If this trend continues, the school cafeteria will no longer be a place where all students dine and learn healthy habits together, but rather a place where poor students must go to get their free lunch. As school nutrition professionals, we have worked for years to fight the stigma associated with the free and reduced meal participation, so it is heartbreaking to see our progress diminished.

We have witnessed students leaving the program for a variety of reasons. For example, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act's paid meal equity mandates forced many schools to raise meal prices on families as their cafeterias were decreasing portion sizes to meet calorie limits. The juxtaposition left some families questioning the value of school lunch.

Despite our best efforts to make meals more appealing, schools nationwide have also struggled with student acceptance of new menu options. As of July 1, all grains offered with school meals must be whole grain rich, but many schools have been challenged to find whole grain rich tortillas, biscuits, crackers and other specialty items that appeal to students.

We've heard students complain that their pastas and breads are burnt or tough or taste strange, and indeed, these whole grain rich foods do have a different texture, appearance and flavor than what students might find at home or in their favorite restaurants.

Food companies serving the school nutrition industry have worked hard to introduce new foods that meet the standards and student tastes, but some of these products are simply not available or affordable for all districts, especially small and rural districts.

My program benefits from purchasing power, a regional co-op and strong distribution channels, but I have heard from many colleagues in other districts whose vendors or distributors simply do not carry enough whole grain rich or low sodium items to choose from, let alone in portion sizes that meet the standards.

These same districts also lack the necessary staff resources to manage all the required changes. My district used to employ one staff member to oversee both menu planning and procurement. Since these new requirements took effect, I had to hire a second employee to manage these duties.

We have dedicated hours to menu planning. Trying to balance the fat, sodium, calories and component requirements is much like solving a puzzle. For example, when you reduce the fat in your recipes it becomes difficult to meet the meal's calorie minimums. I am thankful every day that I have the staff behind me to help solve the puzzle, because I know that small districts don't have the luxury of bringing on another person to help.

School districts with low free and reduced meal eligibility have also faced unique challenges under the new standards because the decline in paid meal participation has a greater impact on their budgets. In states like Minnesota, New York, and Illinois, which do not mandate participation in the National School Lunch Program, media has reported on schools dropping out of the program altogether rather than having to meet the rigid and costly regulatory requirements.

Most school districts, however, rely on the National School Lunch Program's reimbursements and do not have the option or desire to leave the program.

Some districts have been able to successfully overcome many of the challenges under the new requirements. For example, districts with very high free and reduced price eligibility benefit from higher meal reimbursements, have access to more federal grants, and are less likely to experience a decline in student participation under the new standards. Other districts benefit from lower labor and food costs, or additional state meal reimbursements or support. These districts may be better equipped to manage the financial costs of meeting the new standards.

But many districts nationwide are struggling both from reduced revenue from declining participation and the higher costs of preparing meals that meet the requirements. In fact, the School Nutrition Association's *2013 Back to School Trends Survey* found that in the 2012-2013 school year 47% of school meal programs reported revenue declined while more than nine of ten reported food costs were up.

School meal programs operate on an extremely tight budget. With the federal reimbursement rate for serving a free lunch just over $3, schools are required to serve well-balanced, healthy school meals for less than what most people in this room paid for their morning coffee. Schools must cover labor and benefits, supplies, equipment, indirect costs and other expenses, leaving little more than $1 to spend on the food for each lunch tray.

And unfortunately, food – especially those required in the new federal regulations – is getting more expensive. The price of fruits and vegetables are subject to drought, floods and fluctuations in transportation costs based on the growing season. Dairy costs are up, and of course, labor and benefit costs have increased nationwide. Yet, despite significant inflationary increases in food prices over the last year, the reimbursement rate adjustment for the coming school year was actually *smaller* than the one for the previous school year.

In my district, each half pint of milk will cost me a nickel more this school year. That increase alone exceeds the increase in the breakfast reimbursement and is equal to the increase in the lunch reimbursement.

Although school nutrition professionals appreciate every additional penny we receive, the 4 cent increase for breakfast comes nowhere close to covering the significant costs schools face now that they are required to double the amount of produce offered with each breakfast – up to a full cup, per the July

1, 2014 mandates. In my district, a half cup of fresh fruit costs on average 25 cents, a far cry from 4 cents.

Meanwhile, under the new mandate that every student must take a fruit or vegetable with their meals, whether they intend to eat it, school nutrition professionals have watched in despair as much of this costly produce ends up in the trash.

My program has determined that 18 percent of our students chose not to take a fruit with breakfast. Now that we must serve a fruit with every breakfast, we anticipate an $111,000 increase in breakfast costs.

Researchers from Cornell and Brigham Young Universities found that on a national scale, the requirement to serve fruits or vegetables with school meals results in a nearly 100% increase in waste with about $684 million worth of produce being thrown the trash per year. That is enough to serve complete reimbursable school lunches to more than 228 million students.

Schools have been encouraging students to choose fruits and vegetables and preparing them in appealing ways, but forcing students to take food they don't want is a recipe for failure. This requirement is feeding garbage cans, while depleting limited funds that could be directed to menu improvements or nutrition education, proven to increase student consumption of healthy foods.

As school nutrition professionals struggle to manage rising costs and waste, what was once a problem for school meal programs is rapidly becoming a problem for school districts. Meal programs are not permitted to carry losses over from one school year to the next, which means that school districts have to pick up the tab. Financial instability in the meal program can cut into a school district's educational funds. We all want school meals to fuel academic success not drain funds from academics.

As the 2014-2015 school year begins, school meal programs and districts alike will face additional challenges as they work together to meet the new Smart Snacks in School rules on foods sold in vending machines, school stores and a la carte lines. While many of these requirements bring welcome changes to our schools, many meal programs have been forced to strip healthy entrée options from their a la carte menus because of the strict sodium limits under Smart Snacks.

Even USDA is unable to meet these standards using their own ingredients. A sandwich prepared with USDA's 8 inch whole wheat tortilla, a half ounce of reduced fat cheddar cheese and 2 ounces reduced sodium ham contains over 900mg of sodium without any condiments. The reduced sodium ham alone nearly exceeds the *Smart Snacks* 480mg per entrée sodium limit.

School Nutrition Association has been working to support members in addressing all the challenges under the new requirements. At our Annual National Conference, SNA hosted over 90 education sessions to provide new ideas and approaches for promoting healthy school meals to students, addressing financial challenges and overcoming menu planning hurdles. We will continue to work with USDA and our partners to provide members with resources to help.

We also look forward to working with the Committee throughout the reauthorization process to address these challenges and others, like short lunch periods, which leave students little time to consume healthy school meals.

In closing I'd ask that the 55,000 members of the School Nutrition Association continue to be part of the on-going discussion and deliberation as members of the committee and staff consider and draft the reauthorization language. We want to be a resource to you, on the front end of your work, to provide you with practical applications of the law that you're creating.

And of course, any of our members would welcome and encourage any members of the committee, and all of your colleagues to visit a school in your district. You can see firsthand how the food is prepared, talk to local school nutrition personnel about what is working, what isn't, and how we can work together to improve health and nutrition outcomes.

Thank you again for inviting me here today and I'm happy to answer any questions the Committee has.



Written Statement for the Record

Scott Clements, Director

Mississippi Department of Education

Office of Child Nutrition and Healthy Schools

Before the

United States Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

Good morning Chairman Stabenow, Ranking Member Cochran, and Members of the Committee. My name is Scott Clements and I am the Director of the Offices of Child Nutrition and Healthy Schools for the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). On behalf of State Superintendent Wright, the Mississippi State Board of Education, the Office of Child Nutrition, and the thousands of food service employees across our state, it is a pleasure to be here today and to have the opportunity to discuss a few Mississippi initiatives designed to improve school meals.

The first initiative I would like to present is our Statewide Purchasing Cooperative, the first Child Nutrition statewide purchasing entity in the nation. This project began in 1992 as an effort to both lower costs and simplify procurement for school districts.

The majority of school districts in Mississippi have only a small number of schools, with most in rural areas. As such, both product prices and delivery fees were high due to their limited buying power. However, by pooling the buying power of almost every school in the state, we are able to utilize the economies of scale inherent with large volume purchasing. This allows us to provide significant savings to participating organizations.

Our office issues bids for food and related supplies used in Child Nutrition programs across the state. We administer contracts in excess of $130 million per year. Due to the high volume of purchases, we are able to negotiate prices directly with manufacturers for some items and reduce costs even further.

Currently, the Cooperative has 183 member organizations representing nearly 1,000 delivery sites. The majority of the participating organizations are public schools with all but two districts in the state participating. Additional members include a number of Head Start organizations, non-public schools, and government agencies that participate in the National School Lunch Program.

We are not allowed to use USDA State Administrative Expense Funds to support this program. Instead, the Cooperative is self-funded. We charge participants about half a penny ($.0056) per lunch served to pay for staff, office space, equipment, and travel expenses.

Our office is also responsible for the ordering and distribution of over $16 million in USDA donated foods. Through our Purchasing Cooperative, we have a statewide delivery system for food already in place. This allows us to distribute USDA Foods for a minimal fee, providing further cost savings for Mississippi schools.

We have also made use of both the buying power and distribution network of our Purchasing Cooperative to support Farm to School at the state level. Even though Mississippi is an agriculture-based state, schools face many challenges implementing Farm to School programs. Many of our state's most abundant crops, such as cotton and soybeans, simply cannot be used in school cafeterias. Further, the

harvest season for many crops is during the summer months, when school is not in session.

To assist both Mississippi schools and farmers we have worked with the DOD and the Mississippi Department of Agriculture since 2002 to bring locally grown products to schools throughout the state. During school year 2014-2015, over $1,000,000 of locally grown produce will be delivered to Mississippi schools. Some of the items scheduled for delivery to schools include watermelons, tomatoes, cabbage, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, blueberries, and broccoli.

Another initiative of our office was to assist schools in meeting the new sodium requirements for school meals. When first announced, products simply were not available to allow schools to meet the new standards while serving appetizing meals and maintaining student participation.

The buying power of the Purchasing Cooperative allowed us to partner with a chef from the Culinary Institute of America and a national food manufacturer to reduce sodium in school meals. We created three no sodium spice blends (Creole, Southwest, and Italian) for use in recipes in child nutrition programs. These spice blends became available in 2013. We also developed 50 standardized low sodium recipes to assist schools in using these no-sodium alternatives. These spice blends are now available from the manufacturer to all schools in the United States.

I would like to discuss another initiative regarding school recipes and menus. In 1996, our office provided schools with a recipe and menu portfolio, MS Cycles. This portfolio assisted schools in meeting USDA nutrition standards for school meals through a system of standardized recipes and sample menus. An update, MS Cycles II, was completed in 2005 to incorporate new recipes and reflect changes in ingredients. However, the nutrition standards proposed in the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, made further revisions impractical. The complex menu planning requirements, multi-year implementation timelines, and implementation of weighted averages for nutritional analyses made further development of preplanned menus with multiple food choices, as provided by MS Cycles I and II, impossible.

It was the determination of the Office of Child Nutrition that many Mississippi schools would not have the ability and resources to perform the complex menu planning required by the new USDA regulations. Further, USDA had not provided any resources to assist with meeting the new requirements.

In response, a Mississippi taskforce was assembled in 2010 to create a new menu planning tool and recipes. The resulting product is *Mississippi Recipes for Success* (MRS), consisting of a six manual set and an online version of the program. Breakfast and lunch menu planning matrices were created for school districts to develop appealing, customized weekly menus for all age/grade groups in compliance with USDA nutrition standards. All MRS recipes use only ingredients

available from the Purchasing Cooperative, USDA Foods, and the DOD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. This guarantees menus are in compliance with nutrition standards while simplifying Administrative Reviews conducted by our office as required by USDA.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before this Committee. I would be pleased to answer any questions or provide additional information as needed.

United States Senate
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

Meeting the Challenges of Feeding America's School Children

July 23, 2014

Testimony of:

Phillip R. Muir
President and CEO
Muir Copper Canyon Farms
Salt Lake City, Utah

MUIR
COPPER CANYON FARMS
EST. 1950

Prepared Statement

Phillip R. Muir
President and CEO
Muir Copper Canyon Farms
Salt Lake City, Utah

Before the
United States Senate
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
July 23, 2014

Good Morning Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Cochran and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. My name is Phillip Muir, I'm the President and CEO of Muir Copper Canyon Farms in Salt Lake City, Utah. Thank you for inviting me here today and for calling attention to the critical issue of school nutrition. I am passionate about making a difference in the nutrition of our school age children.

Muir Copper Canyon Farms is a food service produce distributor. I am the 5th generation of our family that has devoted my life to the fresh fruit and vegetable industry. Muir Copper Canyon Farms provides fresh fruits and vegetables to 52 rural and urban school districts in Utah, Idaho, and western Wyoming with a total enrollment of 450,000 students. Schools are about 15% of our total sales volume. We have worked with schools for the last 15 years and our school business has significantly increased every year since 2006. We are the USDA/DoD Fresh Prime Vendor for schools in Utah, Idaho, and western Wyoming and for three Indian Reservations in Utah and Idaho. In addition, we also provide schools with fresh fruits and vegetables for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, School Lunch, School Breakfast and the Summer Feeding Programs.

Muir Copper Canyon Farms is an owner member of Pro*Act, LLC, which is a cooperative of 70 produce distributors across North America who leverage our purchasing power together to make the most price effective, quality assured, and food safe purchases possible. We are also a member of United Fresh Produce Association and I serve on their Nutrition and Health Council.

We have a saying at Muir Copper Canyon Farms, "Our School Customers Deserve the Best". Our team is passionate about working with schools - the best not only in quality, but in service and value. Success is students eating more fruits and vegetables, going home and telling their parents about the new fruits and vegetables they tried at school and helping to improve the family's eating habits. We consider ourselves more than just a supplier or bid winner – we are a partner with our school customers. Our goal is to be a solution provider through information, training, and consultation assisting schools to successfully implement all of the new fruit and vegetable requirements.

We have dedicated staff for our school business; they meet with our school customers throughout the school year to discuss new fruit and vegetable items, seasonality, getting the best value for their budgets, buying local produce, delivery schedules, etc. We provide schools with our "Fresh Produce Standards and Handling Guide" as a training tool and provide schools with special training workshops, nutrition education materials, Farmer bios, and participate in Kick-Off events. If a specific fruit or vegetable becomes unaffordable during the school year, we work with our schools to substitute another fruit or vegetable that meets the school's needs. This is a collaborative relationship, lots of back and forth. We want our schools to be successful.

To highlight a few examples:

- For the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program we worked with schools to lower labor and packaging costs while providing them with a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables individually portioned and in a system easy to deliver to the classroom.

- We have a booth at the Utah SNA show each year. In June, we demonstrated how schools could grill fresh vegetables in bite sizes. When one attendee said, "We don't have grills in our schools, that is not realistic", we showed them how the same results could be achieved using their school ovens.

- We have introduced new dark green leafy salad mixes to our schools that are more appealing, more nutrient dense, and more cost effective.

From our experience working with schools, there are a few key points I want to make:

- Schools that were proactive in improving the healthfulness of school meals early on, made incremental changes, and offered nutrition education are not having problems or experiencing increased plate waste.

- School that have the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program --- these are the highest poverty elementary schools in our area --- are successful implementing the new nutrition standards because they have already introduced their students to a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables.

- Students like fresh fruits and vegetables when they are served great tasting fruits and vegetables. I receive continued feed-back from kids, parents and school officials in my own community, thanking me and the schools for undertaking these changes.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans calls for children and adults to "make ½ their plate fruits and vegetables" at every meal. How can you call school breakfast or school lunch a "meal" if it doesn't include at least a ½ cup of fruits or vegetables? After all, it is only ½ cup per meal!

The produce industry is committed and stands ready to support school food service directors in successfully implementing the new fruit and vegetable requirements. There are produce suppliers all over the country who are just as passionate and committed to supporting schools as I am. We all want to provide schools with great quality fresh produce and help student's increase their consumption.

Just last week, myself, and produce distributors from around the country, growers, fresh-cut processors, Pro*Act, and United Fresh Produce Association hosted a Fresh Produce Pavilion at the School Nutrition Association's (SNA) annual convention in Boston. Hundreds of school food service directors came to our "Ask the Experts-Produce Solution Center" to ask questions about writing a Produce Request for Proposal (RFP), to talk about how they could procure more fresh and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables, or to ask how they could get a fresh produce vending machine to meet Smart Snacks in Schools requirements. We also presented two education workshop sessions on these subjects, all in an effort to assist the school nutrition community.

In closing, my hat is off to those in the trenches who are implementing healthier school meals. The produce industry is committed to helping you; we want to be your partner. We strongly support the continued implementation of the Healthy, Hungry-Free Kids Act of 2010 and maintaining the requirements that school children have access to a wide variety of colorful fruits and vegetables and select a ½ cup of fruit or vegetable at each meal. This is about improving the health of America's children!

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak here today.

Muir Copper Canyon Farms *is a produce, dairy, and specialty food distributor in Salt Lake City, Utah. It services customers primarily in the foodservice industry in Utah, Idaho, and western Wyoming. It sources fresh and specialty products from around the world for its customers. Muir is an owner/member of Pro*Act, a national cooperative, and co-owner of Harvest Sensations and Integrated Fresh Solutions which all provide supply chain solutions enabling Muir to be the leader in produce distribution in the Intermountain West.*

PRO*ACT *is North America's leading distributor of fresh food to the foodservice and retail industries, including the school programs throughout the county, sourcing from premier national, regional and local farmers. PRO*ACT streamlines the produce supply chain, offering significant cost benefits and an easy, one-call solution to source the freshest produce from more than 70 third-party inspected, independently owned, local distribution centers across the United States and Canada. PRO*ACT provides category cost management through commodity contract pricing, in-house consultation services and integrated produce program distribution management.*

Founded in 1904, the ***United Fresh Produce Association*** *brings together companies across every segment of the fresh produce supply chain, including growers, shippers, fresh-cut processors, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, foodservice operators, industry suppliers and allied associations. We empower industry leaders to shape sound government policy. We deliver the resources and expertise companies need to succeed in managing complex business and technical issues. We provide the training and development individuals need to advance their careers in produce. And, through these endeavors, we unite our industry with a common purpose – to build long-term value for our members and grow produce consumption. The United Fresh Foundation is a founding partner of Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools which supports First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! initiative.*



DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF SCHOOL NUTRITION

"It Takes More Than Books for Children To Learn"

Testimony of Betti Wiggins
Executive Director, Detroit Public Schools Office of School Nutrition
Vice Chair, Local Food Association
To the United States Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
July 23, 2014

Chairwoman Stabenow, Senator Cochran, Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am Betti Wiggins, the Executive Director of the Detroit Public Schools Office of School Nutrition. I am honored to be with you here today to address what I believe to be a topic of fundamental importance to all of us: the health and well being of America's children. As we all know, in school cafeteria lines, there are no D's and R's. There are only young Americans who we are all privileged to serve. I am grateful to Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Cochran for the deliberative and constructive tone of this committee's deliberations on this important issue.

The trials and tribulations of Detroit are well known. In a district with declining enrollment and multiple facilities closures in recent years, I have the great pleasure of supervising provision of high quality meals to approximately 50,000 valued and loved children. Most of our children eat breakfast and lunch with us, and many also eat supper within our facilities. Our work makes a critical positive difference in the their lives, their families and our community.

DPS was the first school district in the country to make breakfast universally available, supported by several studies that demonstrate a direct correlation between eating breakfast and improved academic performance. Our lunch programs provide free, fresh-cooked, hot foods to all students in all schools. Our menus include a healthy array of fresh vegetables and fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, 100% fruit juices and low-fat milk. We also offer free healthy suppers for numerous at-risk students through our after-school programs.

In Detroit, we have warmly welcomed the higher nutritional standards of the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. The legislation and resulting regulations has prompted us to institute changes that are making a positive difference in the lives of our children and our employees. The improved nutrition standards provide a framework that supports several

other provisions of the legislation, including additional training opportunities for school nutrition staff and new equipment purchasing assistance.

It is the improved nutrition standards that have allowed us to introduce new equipment in our kitchens. Produce washers, salad bars, vegetable steamers, warming stations and convection ovens are the new norm. Deep fat fryers are obsolete. The nutrition standards are a force for positive change in Detroit, a force that we see as a necessity for improving the life long health and well being of our children.

In addition to new equipment, our food distribution partners are finding the products we need to provide our children the quality food they need and deserve. We have seen food manufacturers become determined to meet our improved nutrition standards. Food companies of all sizes are developing innovations designed to help us meet the new regulatory requirements.

Since the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 was enacted, large manufacturers like Tyson Foods have gone above and beyond to the meet those requirements, while continuing to develop new products that surpass federal sodium reduction requirements. Ten years ago Tyson nutritionists and chefs completely removed trans fat from all their school lunch products, and have since created items with whole-grain breading, lean beef, and a variety of grilled products. For many years, Tyson Foods has been dedicated to supplying school district's across the country with somewhat healthier products that kids will actually eat. All of this change is enabling us to more effectively serve the nutritional needs of all our children.

While approximately 87% of our children in Detroit are eligible for free school meals, I have discovered through my career that hunger and malnutrition is not confined to children from low-income families. In fact, food insecurity is as common among children from the end of the cul-de-sac as it is among those from urban street corners. The Community Eligibility Provision, or CEP option, allows high-poverty schools like those in our district to provide breakfast and lunch to all students free of charge, increasing efficiency and reducing hunger.

The program also delivers benefits to our program through reduced administrative burdens resulting from elimination of paper applications. The increased meal participation rates allow me to capture economies of scale, while the savings generated by elimination of paper applications covers the cost of providing meals to children who might otherwise pay, improving the overall financial stability of our programs. As you are likely aware, approximately 4000 schools in 11 states are now participating in CEP. The work of you and your committee, Chairwoman Stabenow, is making a critical positive difference in the lives of tens of thousands of Detroit children each and every day.

Each of you knows far better than us that USDA funding is all about improving the economic conditions of rural America. One of my greatest joys and another direct benefit of improved nutrition standards has been increasing our purchase of Michigan grown farm products. As the Vice Chair of the Local Food Association, the nation's only trade

association for buyers and sellers of sustainably produced local food products, I am particularly motivated to do my part to increase the market share of local farmers.

Farm to School is a term that encompasses three key actions:

- Sourcing locally produced fresh food for schools and preschools
- Helping children to make direct connections to how food is produced through school gardens
- Enhancing classroom education opportunities related to food and agriculture, health and nutrition

Today, over 40,000 schools representing 23.5 million children nationwide are engaged in some kind of Farm to School program, producing approximately $235 million of expenditures on locally produced food, maximizing local economic impact and stimulating rural economies.

Our Farm to School program has produced partnerships with regional farmers that are generating healthy returns for them and for our children. We are feeding fresh Michigan asparagus to inner city teenagers, and they like it. We are increasing our children's exposure to fresh foods, planting the seeds for lifelong habits that will produce improved health and quality of life. I believe our efforts also lead to increased participation rates in school meals, leading to better attendance and improved academic, health and behavioral outcomes.

In addition to fresh vegetables and fruits from nearby farms, our Farm to School program in Detroit delivers additional benefits, including educational opportunities in the cafeteria, classroom visits by participating farmers, and school garden opportunities. In 2012, DPS and several community partners initiated an effort to create gardens at schools throughout the district, expanding teachers' access to real-life laboratories to teach students about healthy eating, nutrition, and concepts around growing food while increasing our schools' access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Each site features raised beds constructed by students, compost bins, and walkways, thereby creating a Farm to School Learning Center, increasing students' scientific understanding of sustainability. We now have 71 school-based gardens, a 2.5-acre school farm and have reestablished the nationally known Catherine Ferguson Farm. We are also currently engaged in the development of the Kettering Project, which is the repurposing of a closed thirty-acre high school site.

It is my position that Farm to school is a long-term strategy that enables children to develop a deeper, sustained relationship with healthy food. Farm to School is an important strategy for ushering healthy food change into schools, allowing kids to gain familiarity with what are often new foods so they integrate them into their lifelong healthy eating habits.

In conclusion, Madam Chairwoman, our recent shared progress toward improving school meals programs represents a solid value proposition for the nation. As leaders responsible for the well being of children, whether we are parents, in Congress, school nutrition officers, in food business or at USDA, we must steal our focus away from *the process of change* to instead *emphasize the progress* enabled by the new policies.

Institutional change is always difficult, and often seems near impossible. It always takes time and includes short-term discomfort. The investments prompted by improved school nutrition standards have and will continue to generate invaluable returns. Any short-term pains pale in comparison to the benefits from reform that is both highly desirable and attainable. Change worth making takes time. Nine out of ten school districts across the country are already in compliance with the new standards. We are making it work and work well in Detroit. I am fully confident that all other districts will do the same.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be with you Chairwoman Stabenow. As a Michigan resident, I want to say how proud and grateful we are for your leadership on this issue.



National Food Service Management Institute
The University of Mississippi
6 Jeanette Phillips Drive, Post Office Box 1473, University, MS 38677-0188
Phone: 800-321-3054 ▪ Fax: 800-321-3061

STATEMENT

OF DR. KATHRYN WILSON, SNS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NATIONAL FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY

UNITED STATES SENATE

JULY 23. 2014

Chairwoman Stabenow, Senator Cochran, Members of the Committee, I am Dr. Katie Wilson, SNS, Executive Director of the National Food Service Management Institute, at the University of Mississippi located in Oxford, Mississippi. As the only national institute designated solely for the purpose of providing training, technical assistance, and applied research in the field of child nutrition, I appreciate the opportunity to share our outreach with you.

Chairwoman Stabenow, we are meeting here at a time of unprecedented coverage of the school meals program. School meal programs are not only a key part of the vital health safety net for our nation's children, and as a past school nutrition director in Wisconsin for 23 years, I believe they are the best safety net for our children. When a child walks through those cafeteria doors, the benefit is in the form of food and the child is assured access to that food. Due to the scope of that responsibility, school meal programs should also serve as a learning tool to educate children what a healthy meal looks like. We operate in the education arena, so school meals must be part of that education process.

As a country we have a serious problem with obesity in all segments of the population. It is simply overwhelming to think about the health outcomes of the future. Yet, at the same time, each of us in this hearing room is struggling to balance our idea of what a school meal should consist of and under what guidance school meals should operate. In an ongoing school meals learning exchange with the United Kingdom, I have come to learn that the nutrition



National Food Service Management Institute
The University of Mississippi
6 Jeanette Phillips Drive, Post Office Box 1473, University, MS 38677-0188
Phone: 800-321-3054 ▪ Fax: 800-321-3061

standards instituted throughout the United Kingdom years ago are still actively progressing the health and well- being of students. They will tell you it wasn't easy and it took time for students to accept them, but it was in the best interest for national wellness. Scotland for example, has begun to see a decrease in dental carries and in childhood obesity, along with other positive outcomes. Lindsay Graham, RGN School Food and Health Advisor from the United Kingdom, is here in the audience today as a Churchill Fellow from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. She can lend more detail after the hearing if there is interest. The strong federal support, for these programs, in the United States is of interest to our colleagues in the United Kingdom.

One of the areas of interest to many child nutrition professionals around the world are the numerous resources available from the National Food Service Management Institute, also known as "The Institute". These resources are all available free of charge to assist everyone throughout the United States and its territories, involved in providing meals to children using the federal school meals programs, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. The NFSMI is the only federally funded national center dedicated to assisting child nutrition professionals in improving the quality and operation of child nutrition programs. Authorized by Congress under Section 21 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, it is funded by a grant and cooperative agreements through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services and the Food Safety Division. The Institute also supports the administration of agreements and special request contracts with state agencies and outside foundations they may be working with.

Training and assistance is available in a variety of formats. We have 20 training topics from hands on culinary training, financial management, inventory control, and meal pattern training available in a face to face format. With approximately 200 plus trained trainers organized as regional training teams in each of the USDA regions we provided face to face training for 7,554 child nutrition professionals throughout the United States, the Virgin Islands, and Guam during the 2012-2013 reporting period. We are on track to far exceed this number in



National Food Service Management Institute
The University of Mississippi
6 Jeanette Phillips Drive, Post Office Box 1473, University, MS 38677-0188
Phone: 800-321-3054 ▪ Fax: 800-321-3061

the 2013-2014 report being prepared at this time. One specific example of this included *Healthy Cuisine Kids Culinary Classes* (a two day training taught by a chef and a registered dietitian) offered whenever requested by a state school nutrition association, a state agency or a gathering of districts. This topic was also one of the topics where we had a request to saturate the state to train trainers. In Mississippi, the State Agency organized 8 Healthy Cuisine for Kids classes with 240 total participants throughout the state in a two month period, funded by the Bower Foundation. The same topic was covered in 10 Healthy Cuisine for Kids Culinary Classes throughout the state of California with approximately 350 total participants, funded by the USDA grant administered by the Institute. These hands on classes offer school nutrition professionals the opportunity to learn new culinary skills or refresh the skills they already have. Each participant goes home with a cookbook containing standardized recipes ready to assist them in meeting the new meal pattern regulations. All other face to face topics are available in the same manner. All curriculum for our face to face trainings are available to download for free for districts to use within their own time frame and convenience. The easy to use instructors manual, participant's workbook, and power point are available on our website. Many short training videos are also available for download and use in school and child care kitchens. These are anywhere from 6- 20 minute videos on specific topics such as cooking dried peas and beans and dealing with food allergies in your school nutrition program.

Many of these trainings and others are also available through our online training courses. From how to best use USDA Foods, nutrition 101, food safety, norovirus, and allergy training, over 40 topics of online courses are easy to access from a computer or tablet. Participants can start and stop them at their convenience and a certificate of completion pops up after the participant completes the course and passes a quiz with a 70% learning rate. In the 2012-2013 reporting period, 33,585 participants registered and completed an online course. We again are looking at exceeding this number as we compile our 2013-2014 report. All are available free of charge. A list of face to face trainings and online courses has been attached to my written testimony.

National Food Service Management Institute
The University of Mississippi
6 Jeanette Phillips Drive, Post Office Box 1473, University, MS 38677-0188
Phone: 800-321-3054 ▪ Fax: 800-321-3061

Individual district technical assistance is also available. If a state agency or regional office requests technical assistance for a specific district, the Institute will hire a consultant based on the area of expertise needed. This consultant will meet with the requesting agency and then go into the district and make an assessment as to how we can best help them come into compliance. We have recently worked in two districts in Kansas on free and reduced form systems and meal pattern compliance and are presently working with the New York City Schools to develop a process to train their own trainers in critical subject areas to ensure compliance. These technical assistance visits have resulted in positive outcomes for the districts. This is also free of charge to the districts involved.

Madam Chairwoman, school meals have become a focus point for many in this country. The National Food Service Management Institute and many other allied organizations provide great resources for school nutrition professionals as they work to ensure high quality, nutritious meals are being served in our school cafeterias. Although it has become more and more challenging to feed a consumer savvy population, it is important to realize what our job is within that school building. A child will learn life- long eating habits during their tenure in school.

In closing, I would like to thank the Senate for its leadership in providing this hearing and your commitment to our children and child nutrition programs. I would be happy to answer any questions for clarification as time allows.

Kathryn T. Wilson, PhD, SNS

Kathryn T. Wilson, Ph.D., SNS

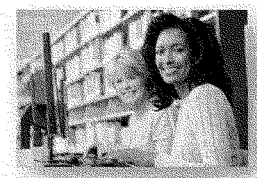
Katie Wilson, PhD, SNS Executive Director
National Food Service Management Institute
The University of Mississippi
800-321-3054
www.nfsmi.org

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

JULY 23, 2014

Online Course Catalog

- NFSMI Online Courses are FREE
- May be used to fulfill Continuing Education Unit (CEU) requirements for certification and credentialing
- SELF-PACED, easy to follow lessons
- Upon completion, a signed and dated certificate of completion is presented which can be printed as needed.
- Courses can be taken over multiple sessions.



Child Care Courses

- CARE Connection
  - Planning Cycle Menus in Child Care
  - Planning Snacks as an Educational Activity
  - Serving Adequate Foods in Child Care
  - Serving Safe Food in Child Care
  - Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010

Child Nutrition Courses

- Adult Learning
- Batch Cooking- From the No Time To Train Series
- Cooking for the New Generation
- Culinary Techniques for Healthy School Meals
  - Introduction to Preparing Healthy School Meals
  - Preparing Fruits, Vegetables, and Salads
  - Preparing Entree Items
  - Preparing Soups, Eggs, Dairy, and Sauces
  - Preparing Breads and Baked Goods
  - Using Seasonings
- Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010
- Financial Management: A Course for School Nutrition Directors
- Focus on the Customer for School Nutrition
  - Assistants
  - Managers
- Food Production Records
- Food Service Assistant... You Are Important
- Hot and Cold Temperatures
- Human Resource Series
  - Communication Skills for Managers
  - Creating a Motivating Workplace
  - Dealing with Conflict in the Workplace
  - Dealing with Difficult People and Situations
  - Delegating and Empowering
  - Employee Discipline
  - Performance Standards and Expectations
- Inventory Management - Controlling Cost
- Inventory Management and Tracking
- No Time to Train: MyPlate
- Nutrition 101
- Motivating Participants
- On the Road to Professional Food Preparation
  - Standardized Recipes
  - Weights and Measures
  - Portion Control
  - Recipe Adjustments
- Quality in Value Added Products
- Receiving Affects Customer Satisfaction from No Time to Train Series
- USDA Foods: Life Cycle of USDA Foods
- USDA Foods: Processing 101
- USDA State Agency Guidance to Procurement
  - Topic 1
  - Topic 2

Food Safety Courses

- Food Safe Taste Testing
- Norovirus Series
  - Part 1 - What is Norovirus?
  - Part 2 - Body Fluid Cleanup: Using a Body Fluid Cleanup Kit
  - Part 3 - Employee Exclusion and Restriction: Preventing
- Responding to a Food Recall: Procedures for Recalls of USDA Foods
- Serving It Safe

Special Needs Courses

- Carbohydrate Counting for School Nutrition Staff

Wellness Courses

- Evaluating School Wellness Activities
- Meeting the Wellness Challenge

NFSMI TRAINING TOPICS

Available for Delivery of On-Site Group Training

For more information about each topic and to view the training materials, visit the NFSMI website at www.nfsmi.org. Enter the title in the "Search" box. Or from the toolbar, click on Document Library, choose #4 Education and Training Resources by Title, and scroll the alphabetical list to find the topic.

GUIDELINES FOR TRAINING REQUESTS

- Training may be requested by state agencies, regional offices, SNA state affiliates, and CACFP sponsors.
- NFSMI Consultant Trainers must train a minimum of 4 hours in a single day.
- At least 25-30 participants per session are required for NFSMI to provide a trainer.
- A Training Request must be submitted 8-10 weeks before the training date. The online Training Request Form may be accessed through the NFSMI website under "Training Opportunities."

NEW TRAININGS for Fall 2014!

- **Food Purchasing for Child Care**
- **Managing Food Allergies in School Nutrition Programs**

SCHOOL NUTRITION TOPICS

Cashier's Training (2-hour training)
Focuses on recognizing a reimbursable meal at the point-of-service. Includes short, skill-building activities for speed and accuracy.

Financial Management: A Course for School Nutrition Directors (4-hour, 8-hour, or 12-hour sessions available) Provides training on management of finances and other resources as the foundation for nutrition integrity and quality meals in school nutrition programs. Lesson topics:

- Importance of Financial Management
- Communication and Ethical Behavior
- Development of a Financial Management Information System
- Reporting Revenue and Expenditures
- Setting a Meal Standard for Financial Management and Analysis
- Managing Revenue and Expenditures
- Controlling Food and Labor Costs
- Financial Planning and Budget Development
- Developing and Analyzing a Budget
- Tools to Analyze Financial Status

Financial Management: A Course for School Nutrition Managers (6-hour training) Developed for site-based school nutrition managers and supervisors. Provides instruction on relationship of program cost and revenue, standard security practices to protect financial integrity, budget management, increasing productivity and decreasing waste, and staff responsibility for sound financial management practices. Lesson topics:

- The Menu and Financial Management
- Food Production Records
- Forecasting, Batch Cooking, and Portion Control
- Purchasing and Inventory Controls
- Food Costs
- Meal Equivalents
- Labor Costs
- Theft and Fraud Prevention
- Communicating Financial Information

Food Defense: Schools as a Target
(4-hour training) Tabletop Exercise that involves key personnel discussing simulated scenarios in an informal setting. May be used to assess plans, policies, and procedures. Training exercise provides suggestions for preventive measures and various resources for developing food defense and emergency preparedness plans. Key concepts:

- The "who, how, and why" of intentional contamination of school food supplies
- How to assess the risks
- Action to prevent or reduce likelihood of intentional attacks on food at receiving , preparation, and service

Food Safety Basics (4-hour training) Developed for new school nutrition managers, employees, and substitute cooks – this training curriculum is designed to provide a basic understanding of food safety. The lesson content covers food safety and why it is important, methods for training school nutrition staff on food safety, how to prevent foodborne illness, and checklists to monitor food safety. The training topics and skill development are based on NFSMI's 10-hour food safety training, *Serving It Safe*. Lesson topics:

- Staff Training Basics
- Food Safety Digest
- Tailoring Standard Operating Procedures
- HACCP Every Day
- Inspect What You Expect

Foundations for Training Excellence
(8-hour training) This training models techniques to actively facilitate adult learning. Throughout the course, trainers demonstrate how to deal with different learning styles, engage the learner in a wide range of activities without over-relying on slide presentations, and establish a positive learning environment. Lesson topics:

- The Opener
- Self-Assessment
- Planning for Success
- Reaching Adult Learners
- Matching Methods to Objectives
- Using Effective Materials
- Management
- The Closer

HealthierUS School Challenge (HUSSC)
(6-hour training) The HealthierUS School Challenge (HUSSC) recognizes schools for their promotion of good nutrition and physical activity with four levels of superior performance awards. This training provides information, tools, and resources for school nutrition staff and school wellness team members to apply for the HUSSC. Topics covered in learning objectives include:

- Basic HUSSC criteria for breakfast and lunch
- Ways to increase participation and calculate ADP
- Award level criteria (bronze, silver, gold, gold+)
- Fruit, vegetable, and grain components
- Menu criteria and assessing compliance
- Production records and recipes
- Physical education and physical activity
- Local wellness policy
- Application resources
- Assessment of readiness for award application

Healthy Cuisine for Kids (2-day "hands-on" Culinary Training) Requires a demonstration area with access to a culinary lab or prep kitchen. Designed to give a maximum of 20-30 participants an opportunity to learn and practice healthy cooking methods by applying the nutrition principles of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* in preparing and serving healthy and appealing recipes that students will enjoy. This training includes four culinary lab experiences that involve preparing, scoring, presenting, tasting, and evaluating recipes. Safety and sanitation principles are demonstrated and practiced throughout the experience. The culinary labs are:

- Culinary Basics
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Whole Grain-Rich Foods
- Meat/Meat Alternates

NOTE: Requirements for Healthy Cuisine for Kids Culinary Training

1. A demonstration area with access to a culinary lab or prep kitchen – such as a culinary arts program kitchen (high school or college), a school cafeteria kitchen, or a classroom kitchen with work stations
2. A commitment from the site coordinator who requested the training to be responsible for the purchase of and payment for groceries and supplies for the training, delivery to the training site, and proper storage
3. An on-site assistant who is familiar with the facility and the user policies and who will be present during the training to assist the trainer as needed

Inventory Management and Tracking
(4-hour training) The ability to track food products across the supply chain is at the center of modern inventory management in school nutrition programs. The goals of this training are to incorporate food product tracking into standard inventory management practices addressing cost efficiencies, food safety, and effective responses to recalls, foodborne illness, and bioterrorism. Lesson topics:

- Basis of Inventory Control and Supply Chains
- Traceability
- Inventory Management Best Practices
- Responding to Food Emergencies

Managing Food Allergies in School Nutrition Programs (6-hour training) Because food allergies are a growing food safety and public health concern, managing food allergies in school nutrition programs must be a priority. Employees will learn about the importance of reading labels, preparing foods with care, cleaning procedures to prevent an allergic reaction, immediate response to an allergic reaction, and prompting food allergy awareness in the school community. Lesson topics:

- All About Allergies
- Reading and Managing Food Labels
- Accommodating Students With Food-Related Disabilities
- Avoiding Cross Contact
- Promoting Food Allergy Management in Your School

Meal Pattern Training for Breakfast and Lunch (6-hour training) Provides an overview of the Meal Pattern for lunch and breakfast, focusing on Food-Based Menu Planning required for the National School Lunch Program. Activities and group discussion are used to reinforce training objectives. Lesson topics:

- New Meal Pattern
- Vegetable Subgroups
- Whole Grain-Rich Foods
- Meal Components and Menu Planning
- Calorie Range for Breakfast and Lunch Menus
- Dietary Specifications for Sodium, Saturated Fat, and Trans Fat
- Offer Versus Serve (OVS)

Norovirus - Everyone Plays a P.A.R.T. in Norovirus Control (2-hour training) Norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne illness, and it is estimated that more than half of all food-related outbreaks of illness are caused by norovirus. This training includes participant interaction and activities. Learning objectives:

- Describe why norovirus is a concern in child nutrition settings.
- List the symptoms of norovirus and describe how it is transmitted.
- Describe norovirus prevention and control strategies. (**P**revent, **A**ssemble a Body Fluid Cleanup Kit, **R**espond to an incident, **T**otal cleanup)
- Locate resources on norovirus prevention and control.

ALSO AVAILABLE: Norovirus for Child Care – see description under Child Care Topics

Nutrition 101: A Taste of Food and Fitness (8-hour training) This course qualifies for SNA core course certification level 1.
This training provides a basic overview of nutrition with an emphasis on the importance of balance in daily food choices and the inclusion of physical activity as a key component to good health. The training incorporates a variety of learning activities including short physical activity boosters. Lesson topics:

- Lesson 1: Nutrition is Important to You!
- Lesson 2: Tools for Guiding Food Choices
- Lesson 3: Macronutrients: The Energy Nutrients
- Lesson 4: Micronutrients: Vitamins and Minerals
- Lesson 5: Special Diets
- Lesson 6: Putting It All Together
- Lesson 7: Nutrition Issues in the Media

Orientation to School Nutrition Management (5-day training) An overview of the management components of school nutrition programs. The target audience includes school nutrition program staff with fewer than 5 years' experience as a director or those who may aspire to be a director, as well as state agency staff, specialists, and trainers. Lesson topics:

- Program Accountability, Integrity and the Role of the School Nutrition Director
- Food Production and Operation Management
- USDA Foods
- Meal Pattern/HealthierUS School Challenge
- Special Needs
- Customer Service, Merchandising and Food Presentation
- Federal Regulations
- Farm to School: An Introduction for New School Food Service Directors
- Financial Management
- Procurement and Inventory Management
- Human Resource Management
- Marketing School Nutrition Programs
- Food Safety Basics
- Work Place Safety and Emergency Preparedness

Practical Skills for Preparing Quality Meals: A Five-Step Process (4-hour training). Requires a demonstration area with access to a culinary lab or prep kitchen. Lecture and culinary demonstration activities are designed to help school nutrition professionals prepare and serve safe, quality meals. Lesson topics:

- Quality and the Five-Step Process
- Plan Food for Just-In-Time Service
- Quality Scorecard and Standardized Recipe
- Organize Equipment and Ingredients
- Use the Right Culinary Technique
- Deliver a Quality Product

Serving It Safe (8-hour training) This course qualifies for SNA core course certification level 1. Food safety is the responsibility of every person in school nutrition programs. Every action has the potential to impact the safety of the food, whether during purchasing, storing, preparing, holding, serving, or cleaning. This comprehensive food safety training course provides guidance for school nutrition professionals to assure the preparation and service of safe food and how to manage a safe and sanitary school nutrition operation. Lesson topics:

- Food Safety is Top Priority
- Prevent Foodborne Illness: Understanding Microorganisms
- Basic Facts About Microorganisms
- A Clean and Sanitary School Nutrition Facility
- Process for Preventing Foodborne Illness
- Food Safety Programs in Schools

NOTE: Serving It Safe should not be confused with the National Restaurant Association's ServSafe® course. There is no certification exam with Serving It Safe.

Utilizing the Cafeteria as a Classroom (1-5 hours) The school cafeteria is a valuable venue for school nutrition professionals to assist teachers and parents with encouraging children to make wise food choices that will contribute to a healthy lifestyle. This course provides tools and resources to enhance a school nutrition program that will be recognized as an integral part of the education system. Lessons are designed to reinforce learning objectives by engaging participants in learning activities. Each lesson offers a flexible timeframe of 1-to-1.25 hours. Lesson topics:

- Marketing Healthy Options
- Reaching Out to the School Community
- Communicating with Parents
- Farm to School and School Garden Programs

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP) TOPICS

Family Child Care FUNdamentals (1-7 hours) **FORMERLY *From the Trainer's Tablet***
Short, focused training topics on providing nutritious meals for young children. The updated curriculum includes health and wellness information, creative methods for program planning, the importance of teaching children early about good nutrition, and steps for incorporating physical activity. Lesson topics:
Lesson 1: Health and Wellness
Lesson 2: Selecting a Variety of Fruits, Vegetables, and Whole Grains
Lesson 3: Cost-Effective Shopping
Lesson 4: Food Safety Fundamentals
Lesson 5: Mealtime Procedures
Lesson 6: Food Allergies and Intolerances
Lesson 7: Infants and Development

Food Purchasing for Child Care (7.5 hours)
Training focuses on good purchasing practices and following current federal regulations. Participants will learn about planning menus, developing an organized grocery list, estimating the amount of foods to purchase, selecting a qualified vendor, and placing orders. Lesson topics:
Lesson 1: Working With the Menu
Lesson 2: Creating Grocery Lists
Lesson 3: Estimating Quantities
Lesson 4: Following the Rules
Lesson 5: Understanding Ethics
Lesson 6: Food Vendor Choices

Happy Mealtimes for Healthy Kids, 2nd edition (1-4 hours) Training designed to teach child care staff best practices for feeding children. Includes basic evaluations, simple handouts for staff and parents, interactive activities, and a detailed training script for the trainer. Lesson topics:

- Creating a Pleasant Environment
- The Picky Eater
- Managing Food Allergies
- Family Style Dining

More Than Mud Pies: A Nutrition Curriculum for Preschool Children (1- 2 hours) This training shows how to utilize the More Than Mud Pies nutrition curriculum to teach preschoolers about food and the importance of good nutrition. The curriculum includes 54 lessons organized around the seasons that encourage positive ideas and participation in food and nutrition activities. Simple lesson outlines list objectives, advance preparation, classroom activities, supplies, books, songs, recipes, and ways to involve families.

Norovirus for Child Care - Everyone Plays a P.A.R.T. in Norovirus Control (2-hour training) Norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne illness, and it is estimated that more than half of all food-related outbreaks of illness are caused by norovirus. This training includes participant interaction and activities. Learning objectives:

- Describe why norovirus is a concern in child care settings.
- List the symptoms of norovirus and describe how it is transmitted.
- Describe norovirus prevention and control strategies. (**P**revent, **A**ssemble a Body Fluid Cleanup Kit, **R**espond to an incident, **T**otal cleanup)
- Locate resources on norovirus prevention and control.

Serving Safe Food in Child Care (4-hour training) Food safety training for child care employees using the four key concepts of the USDA Fight BAC program: Clean, Separate, Cook, Chill.

NOTE: The following topics offer flexibility in the number of training hours which may be provided.

- Family Child Care FUNdamentals (1-7 hours)
- Happy Mealtimes for Healthy Kids (1-4 hrs)
- More Than Mud Pies (1-2 hours)

Coming Soon

- **Farm to School – Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs**
- **Meeting Children's Special Food and Nutrition Needs in School Nutrition Programs**
- **Procurement in the 21st Century**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

JULY 23, 2014

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
Hearing on Meeting the Challenges of Feeding America's School Children
July 23, 2014
Questions for the Record
Ms. Julia Bauscher

Senator Heitkamp

1) I am of the opinion that adults decide what kids eat. SNA has made the case that the school meal nutrition standards are unworkable because they coincide with a roughly 1.5 million drop in school meals purchases per day. This amounts to a roughly 5 percent decrease of the 30 million schools served each day.

School meal programs face a tremendous challenge in this respect because although adults decide what foods kids have access to, kids eventually decide what they will eat. As we have seen with the lunch participation decline, dissatisfied students and families have the choice to get their meals elsewhere if they do not like the offerings in the cafeteria, and this can increase the stigma associated with free and reduced lunch participation while threatening the financial stability of school meal programs. School nutrition professionals want to be sure that they have the flexibility to serve students healthy foods they will eat.

a. Will a 5 percent drop in school lunch participation require schools to draw on other resources to fund their program meal programs?

School meal programs are supposed to be self-sustaining non-profits, operating independently of the school district budget. However, meal programs are not permitted to carry losses over from one school year to the next, leaving Local Education Agencies on the hook to cover meal program losses at the end of the year.

Meal programs are permitted to maintain 3 months worth of net cash resources, but as the cost of preparing school meals has increased and revenue has declined along with student participation, many meal programs are eating through this cushion. A recent survey of school nutrition directors participating in School Nutrition Association's Annual National Conference found that nearly a quarter of meal programs were eligible for the House proposed waiver because they were operating at a net loss for six months or more.

These programs must rely on the school district's general fund to cover their losses, which means that financial instability in the meal program can cut into school district's educational funds.

b. Will this potentially result in kids getting healthy meals prepared at home, thus netting positive benefit for nutrition?

There is no data indicating whether the students who no longer chose school lunch are bringing meals from home, getting food from nearby fast food restaurants, convenience stores or vending machines, or simply going without lunch. However, a recent study by Tufts University researchers examined packed lunches brought from home and found that none of the lunches met all five National School Lunch Program (NSLP) standards, requiring fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low- or nonfat dairy. Only 27 percent of the lunches met at least three of these requirements. In fact, the study found that nearly one in four lunches lacked an entree, such as a sandwich or leftovers, and instead, often included packaged snacks, sugar-sweetened beverages and desserts. Only five percent of lunches contained a serving of vegetables.

c. Could the 5 percent drop in meal participation potentially be an adjustment period where students adjust their palates to healthier meals?

In my own school district, I began making healthy menu changes many years ago. Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) has not used a deep fat fryer since 1996. JCPS menus have meet HealthierUS School Challenge requirements since the program was implemented. Despite early intervention, I have experienced a 3% decrease in lunch participation since the new standards went into effect. I have maintained a positive balance by expanding programs like Breakfast in the Classroom and at-risk suppers, options often infeasible for districts with low free and reduced price eligibility.

The majority of the decline in school lunch participation has occurred in the paid meal category, with a nearly 15 percent decrease in full paid meal student participation to its lowest level in history at 9.2 million students per day in FY 2013. Historical trends indicate that, once lost, regaining paid lunch participation to previous levels is extremely difficult.
Paid meal participation was never restored to the levels enjoyed in the late 1970s, prior to the participation slide experienced when schools were forced to raise meal prices after Reagan-era cuts to NSLP.

Today, in addition to the challenges with student acceptance, school meal programs are again forced to raise prices to meet Paid Meal equity mandates under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act and to cover the increased cost of preparing meals that meet the new standards. Driving students away from healthy school meals is an unintended consequence of the law.

2) The SNA has supported efforts to waive the school nutrition standards for the current year, yet still contends that the organization supports healthy meals and simply needs more time to comply with the standards. How much time do you believe that school districts need to prepare to reach compliance?

The rate of change and short time period in which school meal programs have been asked to implement the new regulations has certainly been a challenge, but to preserve the financial stability of meal programs nationwide, schools need more than time.

School Nutrition Association members support most of the new requirements, including limits on calories and unhealthy fats, and mandates to offer larger servings and a wider variety of fruits and vegetables. But we are requesting commonsense flexibility under the new standards to help students adjust to these changes, increase the number of children participating in the school lunch program and keep school meal programs financially stable. Specifically, we are asking to:

- Maintain the 2012 requirement that 50% of grains served be whole grain rich, instead of pushing forward new mandates for 100%.
- Maintain Target 1 sodium levels, and suspend further reductions until scientific research supports them.
- To avoid food waste, offer, but do not require students to take a fruit or vegetable.
- Allow healthy items permitted on the meal line to be sold a la carte as well.

3) How would you change nutrition standards to both meet the needs of school districts and also ensure healthy meals in schools? Would you change the actual goals of the Healthy and Hunger Free Kids Act? Or would you just provide more time to comply with the standards developed by Congress in 2010?

Per my response above, School Nutrition Association supports the goals of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) and strong federal nutrition standards. We are simply seeking some flexibility under the most restrictive of USDA's regulations to better meet the HHFKA's goals of increasing access to and student consumption of healthy school meals while preserving the financial sustainability of school meal programs.

4) In your testimony you discussed the challenges of implementing new products – like whole grain – into school meals. Could you address some of the successes or failures your schools have encountered in preparing menu items or educating students about the nutritional qualities of whole grain to help make that transition?

My district has a central kitchen and warehouse. The central kitchen includes a bakery where yeast rolls are prepared. We began adding whole wheat flour to our roll recipe as early as 2005. We gradually increased the amount of whole wheat flour so that our yeast roll today is 62% whole grain rich. A very gradual change over a longer period of time has resulted in more positive acceptance of whole grain rolls.

Schools across the country have hosted student taste tests to help identify whole grain rich foods that students like, and many have worked with chefs to develop whole grain recipes that are more appealing. While time and resources for nutrition education in the cafeteria are limited, school meal programs have gotten creative with signage, promotions and events to try to teach students about healthy choices and make the healthy choice a popular choice.

The transition, however, has not been easy. While food companies have done a tremendous job introducing new foods that meet the standards, small and rural districts in particular don't have consistent access to these products through their vendors and distributors.

Student acceptance of these items is always a challenge, even in those districts that have the equipment, staff and resources to prepare their breads and grain items from scratch. Many students simply prefer the white tortillas, pastas, biscuits and other grains that they more often find in their favorite restaurants or at home, and are unwilling to try the whole grain varieties at school.

A recent survey of school nutrition directors participating in School Nutrition Association's Annual National Conference found that 61 percent of respondents anticipate procurement of whole grain rich items that are acceptable to students will be a challenge for the 2014-15 school year.

Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

1. You mentioned that there is a 15 percent decline in school lunch participation among students in the paid meal category. Are these students bringing meals from home? What are the financial implications of this trend for school nutrition programs?

In my district paid meal participation declined 8% the first two years and 6% this year, after implementation of the new meal requirements. There is no data indicating whether the students who no longer chose school lunch are bringing meals from home, getting food from nearby fast food restaurants, convenience stores or vending machines, or simply going without lunch. However, a recent study by Tufts University researchers examined packed lunches brought from home and found that none of the lunches met all five National School Lunch Program standards, requiring fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low- or nonfat dairy. Only 27 percent of the lunches met at least three of these requirements. In fact, the study found that nearly one in four lunches lacked an entree, such as a sandwich or leftovers, and instead, often included packaged snacks, sugar-sweetened beverages and desserts. Only five percent of lunches contained a serving of vegetables.

Another factor in the paid meal participation decline is the HHFKA paid lunch equity requirement. This requirement has forced me to raise paid meal prices three out of the last four years. Declining student lunch participation reduces revenue for school meal programs, just as they are struggling with the higher cost of preparing meals to meet the new standards. School meal programs are supposed to be self-sustaining non-profits, operating independently of the school district budget. However, meal programs are not permitted to carry losses over from one school year to the next, leaving Local Education Agencies on the hook to cover meal program losses at the end of the year.

Meal programs are permitted to maintain 3 months worth of net cash resources, but many meal programs are eating through this operating balance. A recent survey of school nutrition directors

participating in School Nutrition Association's Annual National Conference found that nearly a quarter of meal programs were eligible for the House proposed waiver because they were operating at a net loss for six months or more.

These programs must rely on the school district's general fund to cover their losses, which means that financial instability in the meal program can cut into school district's educational funds.

2. As you explained, children are often not accustomed to eating healthful foods like whole grains and therefore may be less likely to eat them in a school lunch. Do you have any recommendations for increasing consumption without compromising the nutritional quality of the food?

School Nutrition programs across the country have been encouraging students to try new foods through a variety of programs including farm to school, taste tests, student cooking challenges, school gardens, and other nutrition education programs in the cafeteria such as Harvest of the Month clubs. Allowing students to try samples of foods they are not familiar with is a great way to introduce them gradually to new food products. But full acceptance takes time. Strong parental and community support is also important in helping children embrace healthy menu changes.

SNA members know that exposing students to healthy items in a fun way does help increase consumption over time, especially when students are unfamiliar with them due to lack of exposure at home or in restaurants. However, forcing them to take items can backfire and result in increased plate waste.

Despite the success school meal programs have had with these unique and creative ideas, unfortunately, a decrease in funds limits the availability of these programs.

3. Dr. Wilson explained many resources offered by the National Food Service Management Institute; how can these resources be useful to the School Nutrition Association? Working together, can we develop a system of sharing best practices and strategies for meeting new requirements, particularly in rural school districts?

SNA is proud of our partnership with the NFSMI. For years, we have worked in tandem to develop education programs and promote resources. Dr. Wilson and her colleagues have presented at many of our conferences, hosting education sessions on meeting the new standards and recently held four pre conference sessions at our July Annual Conference. NFSMI also frequently visits states and districts to provide training in convenient locations for school nutrition professionals. SNA is always willing to partner with NFSMI and other organizations to further promote strategies and practices for all school nutrition professionals, especially smaller, more rural districts.

4. Thank you for highlighting the challenges that you experience with these programs. You mentioned that $3 per meal is not enough. What do you think

would be an adequate federal reimbursement rate for serving a lunch? Can you also suggest more realistic sodium standards which take into account health and logistic considerations?

As part of SNA's 2010 Legislative Action Conference, SNA members urge Congress to both update nutrition standards for school meals as part of reauthorization and increase the reimbursement rate by 35 cents, provide breakfast commodities and eliminate the reduced price category (providing free meals to reduced price students). While the cost of school meals continues to increase, revisiting these 2010 requests would be a logical point to start a discussion on increasing financial support to school nutrition programs.

SNA continues to advocate for halting the sodium reduction limits at Target One, which went into effect on July 1, 2014. Schools and suppliers must meet this target in school year 2014-2015, but before school meal programs are forced to make additional costly changes, more scientific research should be done into the efficacy of further reducing children's sodium intake. This is an IOM recommended position.

5. Many of the witnesses before the Committee today have mentioned concerns with plate waste of food, particularly concerning the taste of whole grain-rich options and mandatory fruit servings. How can we work together to minimize plate waste while ensuring that students consume healthful, nutritious meals? Can we give students more flexibility as to when in the day they can eat their fruit? Is there evidence which shows that incrementally introducing whole-grain options into the school lunch menu will reduce waste? Will sodium-free spices, like those developed in partnership with the American Culinary Institute help to minimize food waste?

SNA believes that mandating schools offer a wide variety and larger servings of fruit and vegetables rather than forcing every student to take a F&V will decrease plate waste. Researchers from Cornell and Brigham Young Universities found that on a national scale, the requirement to serve fruits or vegetables with school meals results in a nearly 100% increase in waste with about $684 million worth of produce being thrown the trash per year. That is nearly three times the total budget of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program designed to introduce and promote produce to low income students.

Schools have been encouraging students to choose fruits and vegetables and preparing them in appealing ways, but forcing students to take food they don't want is a recipe for failure. This requirement is feeding garbage cans, while depleting limited funds that could be directed to menu improvements or nutrition education, proven to increase student consumption of healthy foods.

And while the idea of having students consume produce throughout the school day is a good one, it is a decision outside the control of school nutrition programs. Many schools are already cutting lunch periods to create more education time.

As of July 1, all grains offered with school meals must be whole grain rich, but many schools have been challenged to find whole grain rich tortillas, biscuits, crackers and other specialty items that appeal to students. We've heard students complain that their pastas and breads are burnt or tough or taste strange, and indeed, these whole grain rich foods do have a different texture, appearance and flavor than what students might find at home or in their favorite restaurants.

Finally, while there are many schools that are able to scratch cook items and utilize sodium-free spices, it is not feasible for all programs to do so. The reasons include limited cafeteria space, lack of equipment or staff, and budget issues.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
Hearing on Meeting the Challenges of Feeding America's School Children
July 23, 2014
Questions for the Record
Mr. Scott Clements

Senator Heidi Heitkamp

1) Coming from a rural state, I find it fascinating what Mississippi has done to help improve the buying power of rural schools by implementing the Statewide Purchasing Cooperative. From your experience, are there any major federal roadblocks the Cooperative faces in accomplishing its mission?

The Statewide Purchasing Cooperative is effective in lowering costs for all participants through the economies of scale and especially for rural schools, through lower delivery fees. While the Cooperative has been very successful, there are challenges.

One challenge in the operation of the Purchasing Cooperative is the inability to use State Administrative Expense Funds. As a result, the Cooperative is totally self-funded and our office must charge schools on a per meal basis for their participation. Also, there is additional administrative burden created by the requirement to keep time sheets to pro-rate salaries for employees who also work with the USDA supported food distribution program (USDA Foods).

Preparation for requests for bids is a several month long process with the search for products that meet USDA guidelines, the evaluation of products, and testing of products in schools for student acceptability. After the bid process, some contracts are for multiple years to obtain the best pricing. Unfortunately, USDA often releases critical information regarding changes in the meal pattern after bids are accepted or contracts have been executed.

A final barrier is school food service is becoming more of a specialized market due to the new regulations. Mississippi is already challenged with a limited number of qualified distributors to bid on statewide purchasing solicitations. Meal pattern regulations have caused distributors to provide warehouse space dedicated to "school only" items, as opposed to having a single inventory for both schools and restaurants. This is a challenge to distributors due to added space requirements and the increased costs from the necessity to maintain specialized inventory.

Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

1. We are interested in keeping American-grown produce in schools. Can you elaborate on how you brought locally grown food to Mississippi schools at an affordable cost, particularly if these crops were not in season during the school year?

   The Mississippi Department of Education's Office of Child Nutrition (OCN), began partnering with the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) in 2002 to provide locally grown products to schools. This was accomplished by utilizing the portion of entitlement funds which are dedicated for fresh fruits and vegetables under the DOD Fresh program.

   In early spring OCN and MDAC meet to identify farmers with products they wish to sell to schools. OCN works with MDAC to determine which products are appropriate for school cafeterias, quantities to be purchased, packaging requirements, and dates of shipment. MDAC coordinates with farmers so they may plant the crops based on the quantities requested by schools. This planning helps lower costs and guarantees farmers a market for their product, decreasing their risk and allowing for lower prices.

   Schools are always encouraged to buy in season products to decrease costs. Again, the coordination between OCN, MDAC, and farmers allows some flexibility regarding crop planting and harvests effectively increasing "in season" time frames. Finally, for some items, farmers may harvest crops and hold them at the distributor's warehouse until delivery during the school year.

2. You mentioned the challenges faced in Mississippi to develop a resource for recipes and menus which meet the new standards. Can you comment more on the process you undertook to eventually develop this resource? What lessons can other states or school districts take from your experience?

   The Office of Child Nutrition has supported schools with menu planning templates and recipes since 1996. With the new, more complex guidelines, our office felt it was critical to continue to provide resources to schools.

   We convened a taskforce of state agency staff and leading school food service administrators, which included seven registered dietitians. The taskforce evaluated and modified many recipes from the previous menu system/recipe portfolio, Mississippi Cycles, and incorporated a number of new recipes. Extensive testing was conducted on recipes to ensure food quality, simplify production, and standardize yield. It was imperative to create the standardized recipe database to ensure quality food products while meeting federal nutrition standards.

   A major challenge was to design a system that could address the new weekly menu requirements, such as planning for vegetable subgroups and meeting new sodium

requirements, while providing for flexibility and multiple options to maintain student acceptance. The development of the Mississippi Recipes for Success (MRS) menu planning matrices was both complex and time consuming.

The cost and time investment for developing Mississippi Recipes for Success was substantial. Few districts would have the resources to develop such a comprehensive menu planning and recipe system. We strongly encourage states and school districts to use MRS or other existing tools. MRS may be used by any State Agency or school district at no cost. A link to the MRS website is included below.

http://mrs.mde.k12.ms.us/

3. Since you created the Mississippi Recipes for Success, have more schools been able to comply with the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act? Do you have any statistics for schools in your state that were compliant before and after?

We believe that Mississippi Recipes for Success (MRS) is an invaluable resource for Mississippi school districts. MRS simplifies menu planning and provides easy to use templates that facilitate offering a variety of food choices at both breakfast and lunch, a critical component of maintaining or increasing student participation.

To assist schools in meeting the new requirements, the Mississippi Department of Education's Office of Child Nutrition took advantage of the one year USDA waiver to suspend administrative reviews in the 2012- 2013 school year. All of our efforts were focused on providing technical assistance and assisting school districts in meeting the new regulations. Further, we provided multiple training classes for both the new breakfast and lunch meal pattern requirements. As a result, 90% of School Food Authorities (SFA) were in compliance before the release of the MRS menu planning system and recipe portfolio.

Since the launch of MRS, 100% of Mississippi public schools are in compliance and over 98% of all SFAs are meeting the new guidelines. With the MRS package, schools will be able to maintain compliance and increase variety in the meals that are offered to students.

4. Can you speak to some of the more implementation-specific aspects of the programs you mention, such as portion size and fruit and vegetable requirements? How uniform are these standards in schools across the state?

All of the recipes included in the Mississippi Recipes for Success (MRS) have standardized portion sizes that relate to the requirements of the federal nutrition program. Further, our Statewide Purchasing Cooperative has uniform standards for items available to schools.

The menu planning system, the MRS Matrix, allows school districts to achieve weekly meal component serving requirements. Menu planners find this especially useful as they coordinate meal items offered such as the daily fruit and vegetable requirements and the weekly vegetable subgroup requirements.

Through the coordination of ingredients offered through the Statewide Purchasing Cooperative and menu planning tools and recipes included in MRS, schools across the state provide uniform portion sizes and meeting the menu planning requirements.

5. Many of the witnesses before the Committee today have mentioned concerns with plate waste of food, particularly concerning the taste of whole grain-rich options and mandatory fruit servings. How can we work together to minimize plate waste while ensuring that students consume healthful, nutritious meals? Can we give students more flexibility as to when in the day they can eat their fruit? Is there evidence which shows that incrementally introducing whole-grain options into the school lunch menu will reduce waste? Will sodium-free spices, like those developed in partnership with the American Culinary Institute help to minimize food waste?

Plate waste is a concern expressed by many School Food Service Administrators and there are a number of ways to minimize it. The no-sodium spice blends were developed to maintain food quality and taste while meeting sodium requirements. By maintaining quality, schools should not see an increase in plate waste. Also, USDA does allow for students to take foods, such as whole fruits, that do not require refrigeration from the cafeteria.

The Mississippi State Board of Education adopted a policy requiring schools to offer whole grain foods in 2006. Schools were required to offer whole grain rich (WGR) foods at least three times per week. However, schools were allowed to keep items, such as enriched flour biscuits, when acceptable WGR alternatives were not available. By implementing this phased-in approach, students became acclimated to whole grain foods and acceptance has been generally positive.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
Hearing on Meeting the Challenges of Feeding America's School Children
July 23, 2014
Questions for the Record
Mr. Phil Muir

Senator Heidi Heitkamp

1) In your testimony you mention you are the USDA/DoD Fresh Prime vendor for three reservations. Many tribal communities across the United States face extreme poverty and obesity rates that are higher than the national average. With school meals perhaps being the only meal some Native children receive each day, in your experience, how have these new standards improved nutrition programs in Indian Country and what improvements can be made?

   Answer:
   Yes, Muir Copper Canyon Farms provides fresh produce to three Indian Tribal Organizations through the Food Distribution Program for Indian Reservations (FDPIR). To clarify my statement, Muir Copper Canyon Farms distributes fresh produce to schools in Utah, Idaho and western Wyoming through the DoD Fresh and to Indian Tribal Organizations through the FDPIR program. I do not have data about how the new school meals nutrition standards have improved Native American children's nutritional or health status.

Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

1. You mentioned that you want students to select a ½ cup of fruit or vegetable at each meal, but a serving of fruit is one cup. As we can see in our half cups of fruit, a half serving is not enough. What would it take for a student to get a full cup?

Answer:

The goal of the new school meals nutrition standards is for students to eat 1 cup of fruit (or vegetables) at breakfast and 1 cup of fruits/vegetables at lunch. The new nutrition standards for school lunch require schools to: (1) serve 1 cup of fruit and vegetables at lunch; (2) to serve both a fruit and a vegetable daily; (3) to serve a colorful variety of vegetables each week; and (4) ensure that students select at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetable as part of a federally reimbursable school lunch. The new nutrition standards for school breakfast require schools to (1) serve 1 cup of fruit daily; and (2) for students to select at least ½ cup of fruit as part of a federally reimbursable breakfast. In my testimony, I emphasized the requirement that students select at least a ½ cup of fruit or vegetable as part of a federally reimbursed meal because the School Nutrition Association is opposed to this requirement. It's important to emphasis that ½ cup is a very small amount and a minimum. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that children "make ½ their plate fruits and vegetables at each meals" How can you call school breakfast or school lunch a "meal" is if doesn't have at least ½ cup of fruits or vegetables.

Schools can easily accomplish this requirement by serving students a wide variety of appetizing fresh and/or fresh-cut fruits and vegetables. Research suggests that salad bars are an easy and effective way to meet all of the new school lunch fruit and vegetables requirements and increase student's consumption of fruits and vegetables. Salad bars are effective with elementary, middle, and high school students. The produce industry is committed and stands ready to support school food service directors in successfully implementing the fruit and vegetable requirements.

2. Given your administrative expertise, what resources do you think should be available to help all schools and vendors with the paperwork process, including the Produce Request for Proposal (RFP)?

Answer:
Training, Technical Assistance and Resources should be available to help all schools. A guide for procuring, handling, storing and preparing fresh and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables would be helpful. Some school districts may need resources/training on how to write an effective Produce Request for Proposal. United Fresh Produce Association and its members are

committed to being part of this training process and to provide educational workshops, webinars, etc. through its participation with USDA's Schools Strike Force and educational workshops hosted at the School Nutrition Association's Annual Conference.

3. Can you elaborate on the educational training and consultation aspect of your company? Who is the targeted audience? Are these sessions mandatory? How do you peak interest pre-session and evaluate success post-session?

   Answer:

   Muir Copper Canyon Farms conducts educational training and consultation for our school customers. We have targeted our training primarily to District Directors and secondarily to Area Supervisors (responsible for several schools). We also have conducted educational training workshops at the Utah State School Nutrition Association annual meeting and mid-year meetings. We have also provided one-on-one consultation to schools during the annual state convention or directly with individual school districts at their specific training events.

   Muir Copper Canyon Farms provides our Utah school customers with a "Fresh Produce Standards Guide for Utah Schools." We plan to revise and distributed this Fresh Produce Guide to our school customers in Idaho in SY'2014-15. The "Fresh Produce Standards Guide" provides basic information on fresh fruit and vegetable specifications, best practices for handling procedures, basic preparation tips, and full color specification sheets for the top 100 whole and pre-cut fresh fruit and vegetables used in schools. This Guide has been very valuable to our school customers. Muir has also provided individual school education pieces for introduction of new fruit and vegetable snack items for teachers and school nutrition professionals to be used at the classroom level.

4. Many of the witnesses before the Committee today have mentioned concerns with plate waste of food, particularly concerning the taste of whole grain-rich options and mandatory fruit servings. How can we work together to minimize plate waste while ensuring that students consume healthful, nutritious meals? Can we give students more flexibility as to when in the day

they can eat their fruit? Is there evidence which shows that incrementally introducing whole-grain options into the school lunch menu will reduce waste? Will sodium-free spices, like those developed in partnership with the American Culinary Institute help to minimize food waste?

Answer:

I am passionate about improving student's fruit and vegetable consumption and want the new school meals nutrition standards to be successful. The goal is for students to eat more fruits and vegetables and improve their health. Muir Copper Canyon Farms and produce distributors around the country stand ready to work with school districts to decrease plate waste and increase consumption. Serving a wide variety of appetizing fresh and fresh cut fruits and vegetables to students every day will increase consumption, salad bars will increase consumption, encouraging students to taste/try new fruits and vegetables will increase consumption, implementing the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program increases consumption, serving colorful fruits and vegetables will increase consumption, and providing nutrition education will increase consumption.

The questions about whole grains and sodium free spices are outside of my area of expertise.

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

For the record, I would like to add this information to the question from Senator Gillibrand about Food Hubs:

Many commercial produce distributors, including Muir Copper Canyon Farms and other PRO ACT produce distributors around the country, are already serving as Food Hubs for local growers. We pick up produce at local farms and aggregate local produce for distribution to schools and restaurants in our market area. Wholesalers and distributors have the existing infrastructure to assist local growers with food safety, traceability, packaging, GAP and other areas crucial to the fresh produce supply chain. Produce distributors with a track record of success in partnering with small local growers should be better utilized as Food Hubs.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
Hearing on Meeting the Challenges of Feeding America's School Children
July 23, 2014
Questions for the Record
Ms. Betti Wiggins

Senator Heidi Heitkamp

1) In your testimony you highlight how the new school nutrition standards have allowed Detroit Public Schools to introduce new equipment, which assists in the preparation of healthy foods. Could you illustrate the extent to which some of your schools needed to upgrade their equipment to prepare meals for students?

Many of our K-8 schools were satellite schools. Satellite schools are schools we deliver cooked food prepared in a central production kitchen for meal service on a daily basis. To improve the quality, variety and taste of the food we converted our satellite schools to what we at DPS define as Heat and Serve. At Heat and Serve schools foods are prepared on site. These are not scratch cooking schools but used minimally processed protein items for meat or meal alternate food items. Given there was no food preparation equipment only, food warmers at the above mentioned schools to maintain proper temperature prior to meal service, we bought and installed convection ovens for dry heat preparation and electrical convection steamer to steam heat vegetables, grains and pasta items. We also required more refrigeration units to hold food items in refrigerated storage until preparation because we had food required for preparation delivered to the school.

2) I understand when the new school nutrition standards were initially implemented not all the products schools purchase now were available. Could you highlight how quickly the industry shifted to improve the nutritional quality of foods they offer to better meet the new school nutrition standards and is there parity in price?

It was experience the manufacturers that serve the school market began immediately. They formulated the products, provided training for my staff if needed and resources to promote the new products among the students. The manufacturers did maintain the competitive pricing.

Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

1. As the first school district to make breakfast universally available, what are your recommendations for how other districts can transition to offering this resource? How has universally-offered breakfast changed your schools and impacted your student body?

   It was a service decision as well as a business decision. We evaluated what the cost would be and then how many meal would we need to served categorically to break even. Understand we began in 2000 and at that time we were 80% free. Below a certain number of free students this cannot work. Community Eligible Option (CEP) has made it much easier by pairing high poverty schools with lower poverty schools. My recommendation would be to use the CEP option where available

   The impact of everyone eating free has increased attendance and reduced untoward behavior in classrooms. Our teachers support the program because it gives the students time to participate in an activity that set the tone for the whole day.

2. Can you elaborate on why children who are not impoverished face food insecurity?

   These are the students of working families who must make decisions on how to use household dollars. These children are the children who are not eating school meals and do not bring a lunch from home. These children eat the soda and potato chips for lunch because they are cheaper than the lunch meal price. This is what their families can afford. I would suggest that you review how many of these working families are using food pantries sometime during the month and how many of these families reduce the traditional three meals a day to two or even one. These children regardless of ages are the children of the working poor, the near poor and the soon to be poor given the economic environment in their locale.

3. Your Farm to School Learning Center is an excellent tool with which to get students involved in the process. What can the Committee do to further support programs like these?

Thank you for your question and for your appreciation of the farm to school work underway in Detroit. In order to further support these programs, it will be important to protect and expand the reach of the USDA Farm to School Grant Program that is part of the Child Nutrition Reauthorization. Currently, the program receives annual mandatory funding of $5 million, however demand for USDA Farm to School Grants outpaces that funding by more than five times. Additionally, there are opportunities to expand the current program to reach our nation's youngest children through farm to preschool and to promote programming for farm to summer feeding sites. Ultimately, farm to school activities like school gardens, taste tests, and farm tours will support the health of children, boost farm income, and bolster families and communities.

4. Is food from the school gardens used in dishes that the schools make? You mentioned that teachers are involved in this sustainability education process. Are school nutrition professionals also involved? Parents? Communities?

   Yes. DPS created the Stop Light Salad. The food item is comprised of Yellow Squash, Zucchini and Cherry Tomato. All school gardens are required to plant in three beds these items. The school garden has a total of six beds. In the remaining beds, schools can plant other vegetables. We encourage students to use the vegetables as raw sampling in the cafeteria. Individual schools cannot aggregate enough crops to feed the entire school.

   The vegetable sampling activity is part of our gardening curriculum. The curriculum is approved by the District's Executive Director of Science Education

   Involving internal and external stakeholders, DPS established the Detroit School Garden Collaborative (DSGC). The internal stakeholders are academic leaders, parent engagement leaders and the Office of School Nutrition Director Farm 2 School. External stakeholders include not for profit organization and healthcare agencies who has a vision which aligns with our garden program mission. The DSGC meets periodical to determine what changes or enhancements that should be implemented to improve service delivery.

5. *Many of the witnesses before the Committee today have mentioned concerns with plate waste of food, particularly concerning the taste of whole grain-rich options and mandatory fruit servings. How can we work together to minimize plate waste while ensuring that students consume healthful, nutritious meals? Can we give students more flexibility as to when in the day*

they can eat their fruit? Is there evidence which shows that incrementally introducing whole-grain options into the school lunch menu will reduce waste? Will sodium-free spices, like those developed in partnership with the American Culinary Institute help to minimize food waste?

I believe it is matter of exposure and opportunity for the students to partake of the items. The committee can expand participation in the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) to all students regardless of household income. FFVP allows student to receive a raw sampling of the fruit and vegetable items accompanied by nutrition education between breakfast and lunch or lunch and dismissal. This is program flexibility and has proven successful in my district. Manufacturers have provided promotions and incentives around whole grain items, thereby encouraging our e students opportunities to sample these items. Many whole grain items are reflected in changing enriched white flour dough with whole grain dough, thereby student do not recognize the difference. I recommend we continue to
introduce the items until we change student preferences for whole grains item provided in school meals.

Recipes developed by CIA are useful and have promise in changing the palates of our students. However, to implement the food items successfully into our student meals program we must change attitudes and skill sets of our employees who are responsible for preparing the meals. Staff exception of the changed preparation requirement is crucial to student acceptance.

National Food Service Management Institute
The University of Mississippi
6 Jeanette Phillips Drive, Post Office Drawer 188, University, MS 38677-0188
Phone: 800-321-3054 • Fax: 800-321-3061

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
Hearing on Meeting the Challenges of Feeding America's School Children
July 23, 2014
Questions for the Record
Dr. Katie Wilson

Senator Heidi Heitkamp

1) Understanding smaller school districts may face challenges in developing new and healthier menus to meet the new standards. What existing resources are available to help these school districts meet these new standards without jeopardizing their already small budgets?

Dr. Wilson

The first school district I ran was a district of 1700 students. We found out very quickly that having a director with food service business practice experience not only enabled us to bring the budget into the black, but we paid my salary as well as developed a fund balance. Too many small districts think they cannot afford a director, but they really cannot afford not to hire someone trained and experienced in food service business practices. Planning and directing the bid process, as well as calculating per meal costs, can be the breaking point for many small districts. Resources for every aspect of running a school nutrition program are available for free either online or face-to-face through NFSMI and other allied organizations (Alliance for a Healthier Generation, Smarter Lunchrooms, etc.). Districts need to invest in training their employees. Again, many small districts don't encourage or provide training for school nutrition employees. The value of training can result in work efficiency, customer satisfaction, fewer lost work days, lower workers' compensation claims, waste reduction, and employee confidence. As a small school district director for 18 years, I was very frustrated with small districts that did nothing to invest in their employees and then wondered why things were not going well. There are many resources available at low or no cost, districts need to reach out and use them.



National Food Service Management Institute
The University of Mississippi
6 Jeanette Phillips Drive, Post Office Drawer 188, University, MS 38677-0188
Phone: 800-321-3054 • Fax: 800-321-3061

Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

1. How do you think your experiences on the UN Committee on Nutrition and your participation in global forums around the world have informed your work at the Institute? What can we learn from child nutrition standards in other parts of the world?

Dr. Wilson

My work internationally has definitely solidified the need for a national resource institute for child nutrition. The positive education outcomes that countries have had due to feeding children in school settings has also continued to give me the drive to make sure the United States is the leader in this area. We have a lot to share with the world because of the federal support we have and how important it is in the lives of children. On the other hand, what I have gleaned through our partnership with the United Kingdom – we have a lot to learn from them about what I call civilized lunch at school. Time to eat, family style eating with adults, and encouraging children to try foods rather than worrying so much about exact portion sizes are all better ways to feed children in school. Scotland stayed the course with strict nutrition standards and 10 years later have begun to see the positive health results of those standards in schools. England had strict nutrition standards, stepped back from them, and now put them back into place in 2014, including a requirement for all students age 8-14 to take cooking in school every year.

2. Are there particular states that are utilizing noticeably more or less of the National Food Service Management Institute's resources? How do you promote the program to states that are underutilizing the program?

Dr. Wilson

As part of our monthly statistical analysis we track where we have been with training as well as where the most hits on the website are coming from. If we notice a state that we feel is under-utilizing NFSMI, we make contact with the state agency as well as the state school nutrition association and offer suggestions for how we might be able to assist their state. We also have a marketing plan that includes hosting a vendor booth at the state school nutrition association annual meetings in each of the USDA regions. If a state is on our list to exhibit we contact that state, offer pre-conference sessions and learning sessions for their conference at no charge. Since we started this marketing plan our online courses, web hits, and outreach has skyrocketed.

National Food Service Management Institute
The University of Mississippi
6 Jeanette Phillips Drive, Post Office Drawer 188, University, MS 38677-0188
Phone: 800-321-3054 • Fax: 800-321-3061

3. What is the most sought-after resource that you provide? Are there any limitations to providing this resource? How do you prioritize requests on a limited budget?

Dr. Wilson

Popular resource topics seem to have trends. When the new meal pattern was introduced we were flooded with requests for training all around the country. Recently it seems to be financial management and hands on culinary training that is most requested. Due to the establishment of regional training teams (training consultants in each of the USDA regions), we are able to provide training to everyone that has requested it so far, including saturating states that have requested multiple trainings in a short period of time. Having regional trainers has saved us a considerable amount of money in travel expenses so we can do additional trainings.

4. Do you do follow-up work with school nutrition professionals who have participated in a face-to-face program or taken your online training courses? Can you comment on the outcomes of these programs: whether the information is being used in school kitchens and whether school nutrition professionals provided you with any feedback?

Dr. Wilson

We do have a six month post assessment that is sent to face-to-face training participants. We ask questions such as: What changes have you made in your program since you took the training, how many others have you trained in this topic, and are there other topics that you wish we had to offer? We have had excellent responses from this survey as to the benefit of the training they took from NFSMI. We do have an immediate evaluation that every participant completes immediately following the training. This evaluation is an overall image of how the participant feels about the value of training in which they participated.

5. Many of the witnesses before the Committee today have mentioned concerns with plate waste of food, particularly concerning the taste of whole grain-rich options and mandatory fruit servings. How can we work together to minimize plate waste while ensuring that students consume healthful, nutritious meals? Can we give students more flexibility as to when in the day they can eat their fruit? Is there evidence which shows that incrementally introducing whole-grain options into the school lunch menu will reduce waste? Will sodium-free spices, like those developed in partnership with the American Culinary Institute help to minimize food waste?



National Food Service Management Institute
The University of Mississippi
6 Jeanette Phillips Drive, Post Office Drawer 188, University, MS 38677-0188
Phone: 800-321-3054 ▪ Fax: 800-321-3061

Dr. Wilson

First of all, plate waste is nothing new. In the 23 years I was a school nutrition director, I worked very hard in my schools to encourage students to reduce their plate waste. We live in a privileged society where waste of everything is a daily practice. Giving children adequate time to eat will help in plate waste. In West Salem, WI, we switched to recess before lunch and our plate waste went down drastically. There are a few studies that were conducted in the 90's on recess before lunch. We also have still not addressed nutrition education. We don't have a standard K-12 nutrition education curriculum so that students grow up understanding why we serve the foods we do. We really need to show students what a full meal looks like. We have compartmentalized food components in our lunch and breakfast program to the point where we have forgotten to show students a complete meal. Good cooking skills in the kitchen, excellent marketing skills for food presentation, and time to eat will all assist in ensuring that students choose and consume healthy options. But we must be patient. We created this eating crisis, we must work together to change the course of our health and well-being as well as that of our children. Look at how long it took us to convince people not to smoke, even when we had horrible pictures of diseased lungs. Schools accepting federal dollars have an obligation to provide children with the very best food. We will help change tastes, we must keep moving forward.

○