



May 16, 2014

The Honorable Mark Pryor, Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Pryor and Ranking Member Blunt:

In the event that the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee may consider potential policy riders to delay or roll back any USDA regulations regarding school foods, we strongly urge you to make no changes to the fruit and vegetable provisions in current and proposed regulations.

The nation's entire public health community recognizes that America is falling dreadfully short of meeting the My Plate dietary guidelines calling for half the plate to be fruits and vegetables. In fact, compliance with this critical health goal falls further short than any other dietary goal.

The childhood obesity crisis gives further urgency to helping children learn to eat healthier diets or face a lifetime of increased risk of chronic disease and escalating medical costs that are borne by these individuals and increasingly by government. Helping children learn healthy food choices is an educational need just as critical in schools as teaching math, science or social studies.

Together with leaders of the public health community and moms and dads across America, we are appalled at the suggestion that somehow Congress should now intervene to block USDA's commitment to children taking one-half cup of fruits and vegetables as a component of school lunch and breakfast. One-half cup? Really, that is too big a burden to support children's health? How can anyone truly call it a "meal" without at least one-half cup of a fruit or vegetable?

Those who want to block even this minimal attempt to better serve our children say kids won't take it. Balderdash! As a founding partner in the Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools campaign, we have collectively donated more than 3,000 salad bars to schools across the country, and we still have a waiting list in the thousands. We have repeatedly seen the transformational impact of offering kids a fresh fruit and vegetable salad bar, and can assure you that there is no problem with kids enjoying a half-cup of any produce item when offered fresh, quality foods.


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For those school districts that seem to be challenged in serving even a half-cup of fruits and vegetables, our non-profit foundation is hosting an educational pavilion at the upcoming School Nutrition Association annual convention. We are bringing produce experts from across the country not to sell their own produce, but to consult with school foodservice directors on how they can procure, store and serve fresh produce in the most cost-effective, efficient and desirable ways for kids.

Now is not the time to walk away from the modest steps Congress has taken to improve children's health and start them on a lifetime of healthy choices. When members of Congress go to their own child's PTA meeting, I would not want to stand in front of the other moms and dads and have to defend a policy that cannot even deliver a half-cup of fruits or vegetables in a school lunch.

Whatever challenges we may face in feeding our kids, we are better than that. We urge you to make sure that no changes are made to any of the fruit and vegetable provisions related to school meals and smart snacks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Stenzel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thomas E. Stenzel
President and CEO

Cc: Members of the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies