

## Child Nutrition

AESA advocates for the highest quality public education for all students. As administrators of multiservice agencies, we not only recognize and understand the importance of student nutrition and school meal programs, but are uniquely



positioned to ensure that the nation's school systems provide nutritious meals to students as part of a broader educational mission. AESA supports and advocates for a federal school nutrition program that balances the critical need of providing nutritious meals in the school setting with the systemic realities of administering a program. AESA's opposition to the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) was in response to a poorly crafted policy, not to school nutrition in the whole. While we advocate for changes to be made to current law, we do not and will not support a full repeal of the HHFKA.

**Reauthorization:** The HHFKA expired fall 2015, and reauthorization bills have been voted through committee in both the House and the Senate. AESA opposes the Senate bill and supports the House bill. Both bills include a dramatic change in the verification of free and reduced-price lunch eligibility. This may lead to an increase in administrative burden on school food authorities and remove more eligible students from school meal programs due to nonresponse. The Senate bill does not provide much flexibility from the nutrition standards implemented in 2010. The House bill would lead to much greater flexibility by requiring that any nutrition standards must meet several qualifications including that they do not raise overall costs. The House bill, however, also changes the threshold for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and includes a three-state block grant pilot program. The House bill also includes a three-cent reimbursement increase per meal for breakfast.

### Talking Points:

- Explain to your Senators and Representatives that the HHFKA represents unfunded mandates that shift funding burdens to schools, who in turn have to either increase the paid lunch price or cut other areas of the school budget, neither of which is a palatable option.
- Ask your Senators to vote NO on the Senate's *Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access Act*. It imposes increased administrative burden through increased verification requirements without providing noticeable flexibilities in the nutrition standards. Ask them to oppose any expedited action, as this does not allow Senators appropriate time to understand the bill.
- Ask your Representatives to vote YES on the House's *Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act*. While we oppose the increased verification burden and the changes to the CEP, the bill would ensure that nutrition standards are cost neutral and best for schools as well as kids. We also applaud the commitment to strengthening school breakfast through the additional three-cents-per-breakfast reimbursement.
- Ask your Representatives to vote NO if the Senate bill is brought to the House.
- Ask your Senators and Representatives for a 10-cent-per-meal increase.