

Child Nutrition

AESA advocates for the highest quality public education for all students. As educators leading entire systems of students, school superintendents 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 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 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 Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act.

Healthy School Meals Flexibility Act: This bill, introduced in the House by Rep. Davis and in the Senate by Sen. Hoeven with bipartisan support in both, amends the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act to provide permanent flexibility regarding the whole grain and sodium requirements. The bill would reduce the whole grain requirement from 100 percent back to 50 percent, where it had been previously. It would also maintain sodium requirements at Target 1 levels, preventing the increased restrictions scheduled to go into effect in 2017 and 2022. AESA supports the bill.

Reauthorization: The Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act expires Fall 2015, and reauthorization drafts are moving in both the House and the Senate. In this reauthorization, AESA asks for Congress to reduce restrictions on meals served. AESA's priorities include: a 10 cent increase in meal reimbursement; reduction of whole grain requirements from 100 percent back to 50 percent; maintain sodium limit at Target 1, eliminating the increased reductions planned for 2017 and 2022; allow anything served as part of the reimbursable meal to be eligible to be sold a la carte; and allow schools or districts to decide whether to require students to take a fruit or vegetable dish.

Talking Points:

- Explain to your Senators and Representatives that the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act represents unfunded mandates that shift funding burden 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.
- Support the Healthy School Meals Flexibility Act (HR 2508 and S. 1146)
- Reauthorize the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act – AESA in no way supports a repeal of the Act.
- In reauthorization, emphasis should be given to:
 - A 10 cent per-meal increase – providing a healthy and delicious meal costs far more than the Federal government currently provides.
 - Reduction in whole grain requirement from 100 percent to 50 percent, to ensure that students are provided with nutritious food that they will eat and that districts can purchase such items at a reasonable cost.
 - Maintain the current sodium limit. Refrain from farther limiting sodium amounts until the scientific community proves lower amounts are beneficial.
 - Allow any part of a reimbursable meal to be allowed to be served a la carte. The current model is overly prescriptive and difficult to maintain.
 - Do not require students to take a serving of fruit or vegetable that they will not eat. This requirement is creating more waste than nutritional benefits. Allow students the option of fruits and vegetables, but let them make the decision if they will eat it or not before it is wasted.