



June 11, 2014

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 1.6 million members, including 75,000 school food service workers, of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), I urge you to oppose language in the Agriculture Appropriations bill to weaken nutritional improvements in school meals and support efforts to strip the provision that would allow USDA to waive nutritional standards adopted under the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act.

For many children, the meals they eat in school are the most nutritious meals they eat all week. With increasing rates of childhood poverty, a difficult economy and rising food costs, many parents simply cannot afford more nutritious foods and rely on school meals as a quality source of nutrition for their children. Healthy eating and good nutrition are critically important for all children as their brains and bodies are developing. This is also a critical time to set healthy eating patterns early and prevent childhood obesity, type II diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer and the enormous associated public health costs.

The new school meal standards include limits on calories, fats, saturated fats, trans fats and sodium and new requirements to increase fruit, vegetable and whole grain consumption that are based on scientific recommendations from the Institute of Medicine (IOM). Schools that meet the new requirements receive an additional six cents in reimbursement per meal. The meal improvements are having a positive impact. Kids are eating more fruits and vegetables according to a Harvard study. Further, a USDA analysis indicates that school lunch revenue is up by approximately \$200 million, and more than 90% of schools are meeting the new standards.

AFSCME members support these important nutritional requirements. Linda Harbin, cafeteria manager at Gahr High School in Cerritos, CA explains:

“We are following the new meal guidelines to a tee and really haven’t had a lot of complaints. We’ve been meeting the whole grain requirements by changing the buns we use for hamburgers, low-sodium chicken hot dogs, and chicken biscuits and using whole-grain pita chips, whole-grain tortillas for fish, carnitas, and chili verde tacos and bean and cheese burritos with low-fat cheese.

Kids are definitely *eating* more fruits and vegetables rather than taking and tossing them. We have worked hard to promote the new requirements. We’ve had open houses, so the parents can sample what we serve for breakfast and lunch. The parents have been very impressed, and we’ve seen that our outreach to parents has encouraged more kids to eat our meals. For sure, it takes some extra work to get the kids involved, but I think it’s made a big difference. I can honestly say we have

Lee Saunders  
President

Laura Reyes  
Secretary-Treasurer

Vice Presidents

Ken Allen  
Portland, OR

Henry L. Bayer  
Chicago, IL

Ken Deitz, RN  
San Dimas, CA

Greg Devereux  
Olympia, WA

Danny Donohue  
Albany, NY

David R. Fillman  
Harrisburg, PA

Michael Fox  
Harrisburg, PA

Kathleen Garrison  
Latham, NY

Ragan George Jr.  
New York, NY

Mattie Harrell  
Wilkes-Barre, NJ

Johanna Puno Hester  
San Diego, CA

Danny J. Homan  
Des Moines, IA

Salvatore Luciano  
New Britain, CT

John A. Lyall  
Worthington, OH

Kathryn Lybarger  
Oakland, CA

Roberta Lynch  
Chicago, IL

Christopher Mabe  
Westerville, OH

Glenard S. Middleton Sr.  
Baltimore, MD

Ralph Miller  
Los Angeles, CA

Gary Mitchell  
Madison, WI

Douglas Moore Jr.  
San Diego, CA

Frank Moroney  
Boston, MA

Henry Nicholas  
Philadelphia, PA

Randy Pereira  
Honolulu, HI

Saeven Quick Sr.  
Indianapolis, IN

Lillian Roberts  
New York, NY

Eddie Rodriguez  
New York, NY

Lawrence A. Roehrig  
Lansing, MI

Joseph P. Rugola  
Columbus, OH

Eliot Seide  
South St. Paul, MN

Mary E. Sullivan  
Albany, NY

Braulio Torres  
San Juan, PR

Jeanette D. Wynn  
Tallahassee, FL

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

TEL (202) 429-1000 FAX (202) 429-1293 TDD (202) 659-0446 WEB www.afscme.org 1625 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-5687

much better food. Nothing is fried. Instead, we bake foods like spicy chicken wings, fish tacos and nachos. Now, I have kids that are coming in and waiting in line every day.”

Congress should not turn back the clock on scientific recommendations to improve children’s health. It’s a waste of taxpayer dollars invested in helping schools meet the new standards and a risky gamble on children’s health. AFSCME urges you to support the new standards and Representative Farr’s amendment to strip the waivers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles M. Loveless". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Charles" being the most prominent part.

Charles M. Loveless  
Director of Federal Government Affairs

---

CML:BL:rf