

304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0103

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1026 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4312

October 8, 2021

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-4502

The Honorable John Hoeven
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies 338
Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3406

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Chair
House Appropriations Committee
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0703

The Honorable Jeffrey Fortenberry
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
1504 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-2701

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair

Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
310 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-1002

On behalf of our members, including school district and state education leaders, school nutrition professionals, and K-12 education and nutrition advocates, thank you for providing the necessary school meal flexibilities to the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs to ensure our nation's children continue to be fed despite the disruptions caused during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your work has been critical in allowing school food service operators to continue participating in the federal child nutrition programs and provide snacks and meals to the students who need them.

We are grateful to see the inclusion of school meal program flexibilities in the FY22 Agriculture and Rural Development Appropriations Bill pertaining to fruit and vegetable variety, sodium, milk, and whole grain requirements. We are also appreciative of the language included in the continuing resolution (CR) bill to extend USDA's waiver authority for nutrition programs until June 30, 2022. These flexibilities are essential as school districts continue to deal with the economic impacts of the pandemic, including supply chain disruptions, labor shortages, and rising food insecurity in local communities.

Districts across the country are facing various supply chain challenges in purchasing and receiving food through their regular procurement channels. Specifically, some districts and schools are experiencing unanticipated cancellation of food and supply contracts, lack of availability of certain foods, unexpected substitution of food products, increased shipping and

food storage costs, and increased food and supply prices due to COVID-19 supply chain disruptions.

We have heard from our members reports of food delivery trucks not showing up at all or being severely delayed, trucks showing up only half-full with incomplete orders, and delivering products that were not ordered. This has made it very difficult to plan meal menus during the school year. Regarding supply costs, districts are reporting up to 30% price increases for raw materials such as aluminum, paper, and plastic materials, which affect costs for foil sheets, lids, napkins, placemats, wipes, towels, food packaging, cutlery, and other common supplies for school food service operations. Moreover, this is occurring at a time when districts are struggling to hire and retain sufficient staff to administer meal programs, ensure program compliance, and feed students because of broader labor, market, and public health conditions outside of their control. As such, any flexibilities granted by Congress and USDA for meeting meal-pattern requiremen.

38 -1.141 Td [.6 (ng)]TJ 0progrity cf6 (s)-2 ((r)-6 (et)4.2 uls)-2 ()0.5 ((any)8.8 (t)-6.14.6850.004 (t)0 TEMC /P <</MCID 23 >>BDC - 0 Tw 2.163 0 Td (-14.6850.6 (.6 (ons)N(and)a-6.7 (29 670.004 (t)0 TEMC /P <</MCID 24 >>BDC - 0 Tw 2.163 0 Td (-m9 670.6 (.5 (m)-5N(and)a-6.7 (e)