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April 22, 2020

**The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture**

**RE: Proposed Rules: Simplifying Meal Service and Monitoring Requirements in the NSLP
and SBP
85 FR 4094**

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We, the undersigned members of the New York State Legislature, write to declare our resounding opposition to the Department of Agriculture's ("the Department") proposed changes to the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs as published on January 23, 2020. Since 2010, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act has improved the critical nutrition and hunger safety net for millions of school-aged children. As such, we respectfully request that the NSLP and SBP proposed rules be withdrawn and the former guidelines be reinstated.

THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH AND SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS WOULD NEGATIVELY AFFECT THE NUTRITION OF STUDENTS AND INCREASE HEALTH RISKS FOR AMERICA'S CHILDREN.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act prioritizes "establishing healthy school environments that are intended to promote student health and wellness." The proposed rule changes would loosen requirements for serving sizes and allow students the selection of unhealthy options and less nutritious foods, including foods high in calories, saturated fat, and sodium. Currently, students receive balanced meals every day, including one cup of fruit during breakfast and one serving of vegetables during lunch. The proposed rules would limit the variety of vegetables that students can choose from. The proposed rules would also allow schools to reduce the required serving of fruit at breakfast. In rolling back school lunch standards on vegetables and fruits, the proposed changes would negatively affect all students' health, particularly disadvantaged low-income students.

School meals are shown to be essential for both physical and mental health for growing students. A study by the National Institute of Health showed that young children in particular require more exposure to healthy and nutritious foods for their development and success in daily activities (Weinreb 2015). Some low-income students may receive their only healthy meals of the day

while at school for breakfast or lunch. When deprived of nutritious options students may instead consume lower-cost, processed food low in nutrients. Short-term effects of an unbalanced diet include weight gain and poor physical health while long-term effects include higher risk of obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.

A 2019 internal Department analysis of your lunch plan showed an overall positive influence on students' nutritional intake. Students' meals consisted of higher mean adequacy ratio and lower energy density, and more varieties of healthy foods were available for their choice. Most students consumed more whole grains, greens, and beans due to the daily offerings, and consumed fewer "empty calories." The proposed rule changes would increase students' consumption of empty calories and ultimately affect students' ability to focus in classes and succeed academically.

We respectfully request the proposed changes to the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs be withdrawn. Lacking valid justification, the proposed rule amendments will adversely affect students' health and schools' ability to provide daily balanced meals. We respectfully urge that the proposals be rescinded and the former guidelines be reinstated.

Sincerely,

Nily Rozic, 25th Assembly District

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