

EXAMINING INNOVATIVE PRACTICES TO IMPROVE CHILD NUTRITION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTHY
FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

COMMITTEE ON

EDUCATION AND LABOR

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EXAMINING INNOVATIVE PRACTICES TO IMPROVE CHILD NUTRITION

**Thursday, October 8, 2009
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities
Committee on Education and Labor
Washington, DC**

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:04 a.m., in room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Carolyn McCarthy [chairwoman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives McCarthy, Shea-Porter, Tonko, Polis, Chu, Platts, Roe, and Thompson.

Also present: Representative Woolsey.

Staff present: Tylease Alli, Hearing Clerk; Denise Forte, Director of Education Policy; Broderick Johnson, Staff Assistant; Jessica Kahanek, Press Assistant; Alex Nock, Deputy Staff Director; Joe Novotny, Chief Clerk; Alexandria Ruiz, Staff Assistant; Melissa Salmanowitz, Press Secretary; Gabrielle Serra, Detailee, Child Nutrition; Dray Thorne, Senior Systems Administrator; Margaret Young, Junior Legislative Associate, Education; Kim Zarish-Becknell, Policy Advisor, Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities; Stephanie Arras, Minority Legislative Assistant; James Bergeron, Minority Deputy Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Kirk Boyle, Minority General Counsel; Kirsten Duncan, Minority Professional Staff Member; Alexa Marrero, Minority Communications Director; Susan Ross, Minority Director of Education and Human Services Policy; and Linda Stevens, Minority Chief Clerk/Assistant to the General Counsel.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY [presiding]. Good morning, everyone. A quorum is present. The hearing in the House Committee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities on Examining Innovative Practices in Child Nutrition will come to order.

Before we begin I would like to remind everyone to turn off their cell phones and put their BlackBerries on silent so we don't have beeps and different tones coming through. I now will recognize myself, followed by Ranking Member Todd Platts, from Pennsylvania, for an opening statement.

Number one, I would like to welcome everybody. Today we will examine innovative practices which will help increase access to child nutrition programs and to more healthy food for our children in our schools.

Increased access for our schoolchildren is a critical issue as we move forward in work on the child nutrition reauthorization. Given the current harsh financial realities for many families in my district and throughout the nation, schools have an increasingly important role to play in providing children with nutritious food during their days. As a nurse for over 30 years, I have seen firsthand the risks and illnesses that can result from poor eating habits.

There is also a surplus of data that indicates that well-nourished students perform better throughout the day and are less likely to become obese. We have all heard our parents say, "Breakfast is the most important meal of the day." Studies have proven that parents do know best.

Research has shown that children who regularly eat breakfast had better standardized test scores, better behavior, and were less hyperactive than children that skipped breakfast. Eating breakfast gives you energy, increasing your physical activity during the day. Eating breakfast reduces hunger, which makes it easier to avoid overeating and can help reduce obesity in our students.

Unfortunately, less than half the students eligible for school breakfast participate in this important program. When you skip breakfast, you are more likely to skip fruits and vegetables the rest of the day also. We need to change all of that.

We know our schoolchildren are not eating enough fruits and vegetables. Just last week the U.S. Center of Disease Control and Prevention released a report that found that less than 10 percent of U.S. high school students are eating the combined recommended daily amounts of fruits and vegetables.

We all know of the importance of eating healthy foods, including our fruits and vegetables, to the overall health of our children in the fight against obesity. The child nutrition meal programs can make a great impact because that may provide more than 50 percent of the student's food and nutrition taken on a regular school day.

We know that change for adults is hard, but if we start to educate our children early enough we can establish lifelong habits and the values of healthy living and wellness for the future. By providing access to nutritious food like fruits and vegetables we have a wonderful opportunity to establish these positive lifelong habits.

And of course, we cannot reach eligible schoolchildren without adequate access to the programs themselves. To reduce administration wastes and improve the accuracy of the school meal eligibility determination process the school meals programs use the process known as direct certification.

Under direct certification children are automatically enrolled for school meals based on data gathered by other means-tested programs. The 2004 reauthorization required all school districts, by the year 2008-2009 school year, to directly certify for free school meals children in households receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP, benefits. This means that instead of a parent having to fill out a form each year for a free or a reduced-price meal, they are automatically enrolled in the meal programs if they are already enrolled in SNAP.

Districts may also directly certify children in households receiving cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy

Families, TANF, block grant or benefits under the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. Nearly all states are complying with the requirement that they conduct direct certification, but not all of them are capturing all the students that they could.

If we are to ensure all eligible kids have access to these important meal programs, we need to improve our direct certification capabilities. The decisions we make during reauthorization are very important to a great number of children, and that was why we have assembled such a knowledgeable panel.

And I again thank you for being here.

We will hear testimony today about some terrific innovation practices which increase access to the programs and better food, but by taking a comprehensive approach to nutrition our children, families, and communities will all be healthier. I want to thank you for all being here, and I look forward to your testimony.

I now recognize the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania, Ranking Member Platts, for his opening statement.

[The statement of Mrs. McCarthy follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Carolyn McCarthy, Chairwoman,
Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities**

I'd like to welcome our witnesses to this hearing.

Today we will examine innovative practices which can help increase access to child nutrition programs and to more healthy food for our children in schools.

Increased access for our schoolchildren is a critical issue as we move forward in our work on the child nutrition reauthorization.

Given the current harsh financial realities for many families in my district and throughout the nation, schools have an increasingly important role to play in providing children with nutritious food during their days.

As a nurse for over 30 years, I have seen firsthand the risks and illnesses that can result from poor eating habits.

There is also a surplus of data that indicates that well nourished students perform better throughout the day and are less likely to become obese.

We have all heard our parents say "breakfast is the most important meal of the day."

Studies have proven that parents know best.

Research has shown that children who regularly ate breakfast had better standardized test scores, better behavior, and were less hyperactive than children who skipped breakfast.

Eating breakfast gives you energy, increasing your physical activity during the day.

Eating breakfast reduces hunger which avoids making it easier to avoid overeating and can help reduce obesity in students.

Unfortunately, less than half of students eligible for school breakfast participate in this important program.

When you skip breakfast, you're more likely to skip fruits and vegetables the rest of the day too.

We need to change that.

We know our school children are not eating enough of fruits and vegetables.

Just last week, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a report that found that less than 10 percent of U.S. high school students are eating the combined recommended daily amount of fruits and vegetables.

We all also know the importance of eating healthy food, including fruits and vegetables to the overall health of our children and in the fight against obesity.

The child nutrition meal programs can make a great impact because they may provide more than 50 percent of a student's food and nutrient intake on school days.

We know that change for adults is hard, but if we start to educate our kids early enough, we can establish lifelong habits and the values of healthy living and wellness for the future.

By providing access to nutritious food like fruits and vegetables, we have a wonderful opportunity to establish these positive lifelong habits.

And of course we cannot reach eligible schoolchildren at all without adequate access to the programs themselves.

To reduce administrative waste and improve the accuracy of the school meal eligibility determination process, the school meals programs use a process known as “direct certification.”

Under direct certification, children are automatically enrolled for free school meals based on data gathered by other means-tested programs.

The 2004 reauthorization required all school districts, by the 2008-2009 school year, to directly certify for free school meals children in households receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as “SNAP” (CMC—“SNAP” was formerly food stamp) benefits.

This means that instead of a parents having to fill out a form each year for free or reduced price meals, they are automatically enrolled in the meal programs if they are already enrolled in SNAP.

Districts may also directly certify children in households receiving cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant or benefits under the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).

Nearly all states are complying with the requirement that they conduct direct certification, but not all of them are capturing all the students that they could.

If we are to ensure all eligible kids have access to these important meal programs, we need to improve our direct certification capabilities.

The decisions we make during reauthorization are very important to a great number of children, and that is why we have assembled such a knowledgeable panel.

We will hear testimony today about some terrific innovative practices which increase access to programs and better food.

We have our work cut out for us.

But by taking a comprehensive approach to nutrition, our children, families and communities will all be healthier.

Thank you all for being here and I look forward to your testimony.

Mr. PLATTS. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning to everyone.

I want to first thank you, Madam Chair, for holding this important hearing where we will explore innovative practices aimed at improving childhood nutrition.

Access to nutritional foods and a healthful diet is an important component in ensuring children receive the nutritional needs necessary to be successful and school and start the journey towards a more health adulthood. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention state that 17 percent of children ages two to 19 are considered overweight. These overweight children are more likely to become overweight adults and have a much greater risk of developing cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and certain cancers.

Several initiatives at both the local and federal level have taken significant steps in advancing the health of schoolchildren. Improvements made to both the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs for the last several years have sought to improve the nutritional wellbeing of our nation’s students.

While the School Lunch Program must meet applicable recommendations of the 1995 dietary guidelines, many schools are choosing to go beyond these recommendations. According to the CDC, the percentage of schools that offer a la carte items such as vegetables and salads to students has increased 20 percent since 2000, with over 72 percent of schools offering these items; over 66 percent of schools have chosen to trim fat from meat or use lean meat, up from 56 percent in 2000.

As a parent of a fifth-grader and seventh-grader—and I regularly go in and have lunch at both of my children’s schools—I see the improvements and the effort being made in my home school district, York Suburban. And actually it is kind of interesting to be sitting in the lunchroom of the middle school with my seventh-

grader of what was the junior high when I went there, and I always comment that it seemed much larger when I was there, when I go back as an adult today. But I have seen great effort in the—both lunchrooms, of the elementary school and middle school, and that effort to really provide nutritional meals for our community's children.

The Child Nutrition and Women, Infants, and Children Reauthorization Act of 2004 required schools participating in school lunch programs to develop comprehensive wellness policies. Local efforts have also improved, with over 65 percent of school districts providing funding for staff development on nutrition and dietary behavior, an increase of over 20 percent since 2000.

Today one of our witnesses is from my district, Ms. Deborah Yargar-Reed, a physical education teacher at Biglerville Elementary School in Adams County. Ms. Yargar-Reed will share with us experiences in her school where she worked collaboratively with her colleagues, administrators, and the local community to increase nutrition awareness and physical activity.

I certainly look forward to hearing her testimony along with the testimony of all the witnesses as we address this very important issue as we look out for the best interests of our nation's students and, in doing so, look out for the future of our nation as they become our nation's leaders.

So I thank each of you for being here today, for your testimony, and again look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.

[The statement of Mr. Platts follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Todd Russell Platts, Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities

Good morning. Welcome to our hearing. Today we will explore innovative practices aimed at improving childhood nutrition.

Access to nutritional foods and a healthful diet is an important component in ensuring children receive the nutritional needs necessary to be successful at school and start the journey towards a more healthy adulthood. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that seventeen percent of children ages 2-19 are considered overweight. These overweight children are more likely to become overweight adults and have a greater risk of developing cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and certain cancers.

Several initiatives at both the local and federal level have taken significant steps in advancing the health of school children. Improvements made to both the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs over the last several years have aimed at improving the nutritional well-being of students. While the School Lunch Program must meet applicable recommendations of the 1995 Dietary Guidelines, many schools are choosing to go beyond these recommendations. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the percentage of schools that offered a la carte items like vegetables and bean salads to students has increased twenty percent since 2000, with over seventy-two percent of schools offering these items. Over sixty-six percent of schools have chosen to trim fat from meat or use lean meat, up from 56 percent in 2000.

Additionally, the Child Nutrition and Women, Infants, and Children Reauthorization Act of 2004 required those schools participating in school lunch programs to develop comprehensive wellness policies. Local efforts have also improved, with over sixty-five percent of school districts providing funding for staff development on nutrition and dietary behavior, an increase of over twenty percent since 2000.

Today, we will hear from Ms. Deborah Yargar-Reed, a Physical Education teacher at Biglerville Elementary School, in my Congressional District. Ms. Yargar-Reed will share with us experiences in her school, where she worked collaboratively with her colleagues, administrators, and local community members to increase nutrition and physical activity.

I look forward to hearing the testimony from our distinguished panel today. As we move toward the reauthorization of federal child nutrition programs, it is critically important that we continue to improve the nutrition and wellness of our children, while remaining vigilant of the impacts of new mandates on our local school districts. Thank you, Chairwoman McCarthy.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. And I thank you.

Without objection, all members will have 14 days to submit additional materials or questions of the hearing record.

I would like to briefly introduce our very distinguished panel of witnesses here with us this morning. The complete bios of the witnesses will be inserted into the record.

Today we will hear from six witnesses, each of whom will focus on increasing access to the programs in healthy food and nutrition education. Again, I want to thank you for all being here.

I ask unanimous consent for a member of the full committee, Representative Woolsey, to sit on the dais and ask questions. Representative Woolsey has been a leader in child nutrition issues, and I welcome her when she comes in. And there she is. Okay.

In the interest of time, given the large number of witnesses today, I will keep my formal instructions short. I will now yield to Representative Chu to introduce our first witnesses, Matthew Sharp.

And welcome. This is your first hearing with us. We appreciate it.

Ms. CHU. And it is a pleasure to be on this committee. Thank you so very much.

Thank you, Chairwoman. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce Matthew Sharp, a tireless advocate for nutrition and wellness in L.A. County. I had the pleasure of working with him when I was in the California legislature, and I sponsored a bill to increase food stamp eligibility by eliminating the fingerprinting requirement.

It is wonderful to see you in D.C. Welcome.

Matt works in the California Food Policy Advocates, Los Angeles office. He works to improve the health and wellbeing of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious and affordable food.

He travels throughout L.A. County to help increase access to school and community meal programs and shape policy and regulations by educating elected officials in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. on low-income Angelino's nutritional needs. They have been doing this work for over 10 years.

I know I speak for the subcommittee when I say we look forward to your testimony.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. I thank you for that.

Next I would like to introduce someone from my district, Mary Lagnado, assistant superintendent for Business and Management Systems of the Westbury Union Free School District in Westbury, New York. Mary is a school business official whose interest in the broad picture of the educational arena distinguishes her. As a senior administrative executive, Mary has a broad responsibility for the financial and administrative operation of the district's budget of \$10 million.

I was lucky enough to visit one of the Westbury schools, called Powell Lane Elementary, this past Monday and observe the wonderful school breakfast program that they have. I have to say, on Monday when I went I got there a little bit early just so I could have a chance to talk to the principal and Mary, and as the school buses came in the kids formed a line and they headed straight to the cafeteria. And one thing, as a nurse, I have to say, each child was given like a Purell to wash their hands before they ate.

Remember, the flu season is here. Wash your hands. It is important.

But I have to tell you how impressed I was. You know, I stayed on the line and I talked to the kids. I wanted to know how they liked the food, because that is the important thing. If the food is not tasteful the kids are not going to eat it.

And as I watched them go down the line and pick out their fruits, the choice between scrambled eggs and French toast, and then I followed them into the cafeteria, and I have to tell you, as I talked to the kids, you know, I asked them about the food program, they loved it. And I know Mary will probably have other stories, especially for these kids that unfortunately sometimes, I am sure, it is probably one of the best meals they get for the day.

But it was amazing to watch—and, you know, grade school. You know, even when I went to grade school we weren't exactly orderly. Well, these kids ate and then went down and sat down on the gym floor, waited to go to the classroom. The older students went, ate, and then stood in front of their classrooms in a line to go in.

And I think it shows that having a good breakfast and seeing the orderly behavior that goes along, it takes that bite off hunger. And I am sure that they are all doing much better in school today than they were a few years ago.

I welcome and I look forward to your testimony.

I want to yield, again, to the ranking member, Mr. Platts, so that he can introduce the next witness.

Mr. PLATTS. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I bring apology. Buck McKeon, who was the former chairman and ranking member of this full Committee on Education and Labor and now the ranking member for Armed Services had planned to be here to introduce our next witness. Buck is tied up in an Armed Services Committee hearing and will hopefully join us shortly, but asked me, in the meantime, to introduce one of his constituents, Richard De Burgh.

Richard has served our nation in uniform as an Army captain, including service in Vietnam as a forward observer, and after returning home and leaving military service has been engaged in and worked in the food service for several decades now, including more than 20 years in food service.

His school food service experience has included opening and managing the largest school district production facility in the nation, serving as president of the Southern California School Food Service Association, and serving as a field supervisor and director of food services for both the Glendale and Los Angeles, California Unified School Districts. In 2005 he was awarded the Friend of Child Nutrition Award by the School Food Service Association. Mr. De Burgh is currently an adjunct professor at the University of South-

ern California for the certificate program for chief business officials, teaching both food services and purchasing.

Mr. De Burgh is here today to speak to us as the president of DJ Co-Ops, Incorporated. DJ Co-Ops is located in Valencia, California, and has been in business since 1989. DJ Co-Ops coordinates the purchasing for over 1,800,000—I think that is correct, right—1,800,000,,,

Mr. DE BURGH. Two million, now.

Mr. PLATTS. Oh. Two million school lunches each day in over 1,000 school districts throughout the nation, so we certainly one, appreciate your service to our nation in uniform, and welcome the expertise that you bring to this hearing today. So thank you, Mr. De Burgh.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. I want to say something at this point, what Mr. Platts had brought up. There are many members on this subcommittee. Unfortunately, a lot of us are on two or three committees, so by not seeing a full dais, please don't feel that this is not an important subject. Everyone on this committee knows this is an important subject, but we all have to say, "Okay, where am I going today?" And that is the way things work around here.

Again, I would like to yield to Ranking Member Platts to introduce our next witness, Ms. Deborah Yargar-Reed.

Mr. PLATTS. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I would echo your sentiments. And it is also one of the benefits of your written testimonies, that our colleagues who can't be here and our staff of all of us have that opportunity to have your knowledge shared with us. And it is a challenge—I am on three full committees and seven standing committees currently, or subcommittees. So I am supposed to be in the meeting that Buck is in, so he is there and I am here.

But it is a great pleasure to have one of my constituents with us here today. Deborah Yargar-Reed has been a physical education teacher at Biglerville Elementary School in Adams County, Pennsylvania, since the 2006-2007 school year and has taught in the Upper Adams School District since 1988.

Ms. Yargar-Reed received her Bachelor of Science degree from Slippery Rock University in health and physical education with an emphasis in lifetime fitness. She earned her Master's degree in health education from Penn State University.

Ms. Yargar-Reed was named the Volunteer of the Year from the American Heart Association for her work with and participation in the Jump Rope for Heart event and received the Gwen E. Unger Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award. She was also featured in the October 2008 issue of Good Housekeeping for her work and the work of Upper Adams School District on initiatives for healthy changes in the foods offered to students.

Finally, Ms. Yargar-Reed attended the Wellness Institute at Dixon University. It was through this graduate class that she began her work on the School Health Council within the Upper Adams School District.

So again, Deborah, we are delighted to have you here and appreciate your service in the community in Adams County as well as your testimony.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you.

Our next witness is Anthony Geraci, the director of Food and Nutrition for Baltimore City Public Schools.

Welcome. Did I pronounce your name right?

Mr. GERACI. No. Actually it is—

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. We are going to call you Tony. [Laughter.]

Mr. GERACI. Please call me—

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Since his arrival in Baltimore last year, Tony's department has taken over a city-owned but abandoned 33-acre farm which is now being used for vocational training in organic food production for Baltimore City schools. Tony's focus is on nutrition and vocation training in the hospitality industry for the kids of Baltimore.

Finally, I would like to welcome Ms. Alice Sheehan. Alice is an eighth-grade student at City Neighbors Public Charter School student, Baltimore, Maryland. Alice has been working for the last few years on getting students access to more nutritious food in schools.

Alice, I understand there are several of your fellow students here supporting you today. Is that right?

Ms. SHEEHAN. Yes.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Could they please stand up and be recognized?

Thank you very much for being here. [Applause.]

Again, I would like to say thank you for all of you taking the time out of all your busy lives to be here to give us the information that you have already gone through in living it and on experience.

Before we start I want to explain the lighting system. In front of you you will see a little box there that is going to be—each one of you will get 5 minutes, so when you start speaking you will be on green. When it goes on yellow you probably have like another minute or so to go, and when it is red if you could follow up and try to close your statements that would be appreciated. Remember, all your testimony has been given to us, and believe me, we have all read it.

First I would like to—again, Mr. Sharp, if you would start with your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF MATTHEW SHARP, SENIOR ADVOCATE,
CALIFORNIA FOOD POLICY ADVOCATES**

Mr. SHARP. Good morning, Madam Chairwoman, members of the panel. My name is Matthew Sharp. I work with California Food Policy Advocates in Los Angeles, as you heard in my kind introduction from Congresswoman Chu. Like you, we are very concerned about the impact of the recession on hunger, food insecurity, and obesity.

The purpose of my testimony today is to share progress from California and identify next steps for Congress to strengthen and expand the child nutrition programs. Among all the possible topics, I would like to focus my brief remarks on a terrific and underused tool called direct certification.

As you heard in the chairwoman's opening statement, direct certification is required in the programs. It is a data-driven method of automatically enrolling low-income students that receive SNAP,

formerly known as food stamps, or TANF, or the food distribution program on Indian reservations—international school lunch program for free meals.

There is a highly accurate method of establishing eligibility and it is extremely inexpensive because the information was already collected by another government agency. Expanded by Congress and this committee in 2004, it is an important part of how the child nutrition programs work.

I wanted to share with you a little progress in California. Since 2004, we passed a state law that established a statewide database to match all the students at a statewide level who are receiving SNAP into the school meals program. That has resulted in a 37 percent increase in the number of students matched into free school meals, so that is an enormous amount of time and expense that local school principals, secretaries, and food service officials do not have to spend time on.

It is an amazing area of progress. It is doing great things for a lot of kids. But some students are still missing out on the benefits of free and nourishing meals, so some innovations are needed to enroll more students and to provide them with the good nutrition that Congress intended.

There are two simple ways to think about the solutions. One is to focus on individual children.

In California, 1.3 million low-income students who receive Medicaid or S-CHIP public health insurance that verifies their household income are not benefiting from automatic enrollment into school meals. There may be at least 3 million more nationwide. Simply put, Congress should permit use of Medicaid and S-CHIP data to enroll already-eligible children into free meals.

Second way to think about individual children would be to ensure that more students are captured within the existing system. More than two in five eligible children in 16 states are not automatically enrolled. Congress should also provide the tools and incentives so that states reach all the eligible SNAP and TANF participants with this data-driven, accurate method of enrolling students.

The second way to think about the solutions is a focus on schools. A thousand schools in low-income areas of California that serve over a half million children—an enormous number of kids in an enormous number of schools—have very high rates of free and reduced-price enrollment in the meals program. And enormous number of kids are directly certified in these schools, yet they still love to collect paper applications for a remainder of those student bodies.

And so we think that Congress ought to take steps to provide schools the opportunity of using direct certification rates as a basis for automatic enrollment into means. Simply put, school food services ought to be tossing salads instead of pushing paper. Families are spending too much time on antiquated and cumbersome and redundant paperwork. It is a simple fix for an enormous number of households.

And to underline what you have heard from other panelists and what you have heard in the opening statements, there is an enormous amount of work to be done to ensure that these programs ac-

tually result in students receiving the meal benefits, not just being enrolled.

And you are going to hear from some other panelists later today about creative strategies that Congress can provide incentives and tools to expand, including the breakfast in the classroom program, grab-and-go breakfast. There are a number of opportunities to strengthen these programs in a way that ensures that we get through the sequence of both establishing enrollment, providing kids the benefits, and ensuring they consume a nutritious meal at the school site.

So I provided a lot more detail in the written testimony—very copious amount of information about the solutions, about the problems, and about all the steps that Congress can take to underline these important tools and make sure they are fully utilized in your communities. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

[The statement of Mr. Sharp follows:]

Prepared Statement of Matthew Sharp, California Food Policy Advocates

Introduction. Good morning. My name is Matthew Sharp. I work for California Food Policy Advocates, in the Los Angeles Office. CFPA is a statewide nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase low-income Californians' access to nutritious, affordable food. Since the 1990s, I have worked with school districts and the state agency to increase the use of direct certification, a Congressionally-mandated system to automatically enroll children in free school meals, based on receipt of SNAP (food stamps) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance benefits. This morning I will share with you the tremendous progress we've made in California—and across the nation—to strengthen this process. I also will identify the next steps for Congress to strengthen and expand direct certification.

Background. SNAP and the child nutrition programs have offered a nutrition safety net for millions of needy families and children since the day they started. The nation's deep recession makes these programs more important than ever. With childhood food insecurity and obesity escalating at rates that reflect steeply increased unemployment and poverty, the healthy meals and snacks that the programs provide, the measurable gain in students' academic performance, and the savings that strapped families can realize with five less breakfasts and lunches to supply each school week are among the many extremely valuable benefits that the child nutrition programs can deliver.

The easiest way for a low-income child to be enrolled for free school meals is through direct certification. When that process works correctly, any child who is enrolled for SNAP or TANF cash assistance is automatically enrolled for free school meals. The parents do not have to fill out another application or take any additional steps.

Over the past 4 years, California has developed an entirely new statewide direct certification system that matches student databases from schools with SNAP and TANF records. In 2005, state legislation was enacted that required the state to develop a statewide data-matching system for direct certification if federal funding could be obtained. California secured USDA funding, provided under the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, and developed a state-of-the-art data-matching system.

The system was unveiled in 2007 and won a Best of California Project Excellence award from Center for Digital Government in 2008. By implementing data-based direct certification, California school districts have saved tens of millions of dollars of precious, scarce resources through reduced expenses collecting, processing and verifying paper applications. To its credit, the California Department of Education is not resting on its laurels; it has established a Direct Certification Advisory Committee to identify improvements to reach more children and make the system more user-friendly for school districts. CFPA is proud to serve on this committee along with food service directors, state officials, and other stakeholders and we have made recommendations for how to improve the direct certification matching process under current law. But there are important ways in which Congress can pave the way to reach more children and move the school meals program away from antiquated paper-based systems.

Current Data. Unfortunately, the school meals programs miss an unsettling number of eligible, needy children. This underutilization is neither acceptable nor necessary. The numbers are sobering. 3.1 million students are eligible for free or reduced price meals in California. 150,000 are directly certified using a statewide database and 550,000 are estimated to be matched using local county-to school district matches; these numbers will reverse as California's statewide match improves steadily. According to a recent USDA report, these systems in California capture only 85% of students enrolled in SNAP and TANF—an improvement of 37% over 2004. Some of the children who are missed ultimately submit a duplicative paper application and get free school meals, but others miss out entirely on free meals, placing unnecessary strain on family budgets and potentially compromising their nutrition. Direct certification is an unusually effective tool because it increases program access, reduces administrative costs and strengthens program integrity.

Legislative Improvements. Let me propose new ways to use direct certification in a sequence of four policy improvements to bring benefits to more students.

First, direct certification, which currently permits children enrolled only in SNAP or TANF to be automatically certified for free school meals, needs to be expanded. We estimate that 1.3 million children who are income-eligible for free meals in California receive Medicaid and S-CHIP (Another 3 million or so students are similarly eligible nationwide; California's share is larger because too few students receiving public health insurance also participate in SNAP). I want to point out that these programs verify income-eligibility, rendering a school meals application duplicative. Unfortunately, students receiving Medicaid and S-CHIP, but not SNAP or TANF, are not automatically enrolled in free school meals because federal law doesn't permit direct certification based on Medicaid and S-CHIP data, and therefore must fill out a paper application for school meals each year. These children are living in poverty and are nutritionally needy—yet do not receive meal benefits that Congress intended. Using data from these health insurance programs to enroll children for free school meals would save money, help needy families, and reflect the indispensable role that healthy food must play in reducing the health care costs of nutrition related disease—diabetes, stroke, certain cancers and others.

- Congress should authorize the use of Medicaid and SCHIP data to directly certify eligibility for free school meals.

The second step is to provide states with tools and incentives to increase the rate of direct certification. Congress just took an extremely important step in this regard: the Conference Agreement for USDA's 2010 budget includes \$22 million to provide grants to low-performing states to improve direct certification. We urge Congress to take the next step and reward states that improve their performance or have already achieved great results. In 2002, SNAP began to offer bonuses to states that improved utilization of benefits, increasing efforts to modernize program access and operations. These bonuses are proving to be extremely effective motivators; they are good models for what could be done relatively inexpensively to encourage the states to realize Congress's goal of improving direct certification.

- Congress should fund performance awards to encourage state agencies to increase direct certification rates.

The third step in the sequence is to create a major simplification for schools struggling to serve extremely poor student bodies. School food workers in these schools should be tossing salad, not pushing paper. Congress should allow schools with high percentages of low-income students to opt out of the standard application system and instead receive a meal reimbursement rate based on the school's direct certification numbers in exchange for serving free breakfasts and lunches to all students. Under existing law, schools engage in a costly, error-prone and extremely burdensome pursuit of paper applications and cafeteria meal tracking, essentially to weed out the small numbers of children who do not qualify for free or reduced price meals. This antiquated process is fraught with problems; the bottom line is that schools expend precious resources trying to collect and process pieces of paper and still many eligible children are excluded from good meals they need.

Instead, a formula based upon the data-driven direct certification of children thoroughly screened and enrolled in other means tested programs could create a sea change by establishing a paperless eligibility process for the schools around the country that serve the highest concentrations of poor children. Such an option would help the neediest children, and at the same time reduce paperwork and free up resources for educational or nutrition improvements.

Under a version of this proposal included in the Hunger Free Schools Act (S. 1343) we estimate that nearly 1000 schools in California's poorest neighborhoods could opt for this simplification if they have a strong direct certification process. More than half a million children attend these schools, representing 9 percent of all students in California. This option would create an incentive for the state to im-

prove SNAP participation rates and the effectiveness of the direct certification process while providing important administrative relief to struggling schools and a more welcoming cafeteria for many of our poorest students.

- Congress should direct USDA to use a high rate of direct certification, perhaps over 60% of students, as a basis for reimbursement rates in lieu of applications in schools that agree to serve all meals free.

The final step is to encourage schools to take steps to capitalize on improved direct certification to ensure all children participate in school meals, particularly in school breakfast, which presently serves less than half the low-income children who eat a school lunch. In California, one dozen districts have implemented classroom breakfast in some schools, with San Diego leading the state with 39 schools serving breakfast to every student after the bell rings.

The results—attentive, well nourished students, better test scores, better health, a proven obesity prevention strategy, important revenues for school cafeteria funds—all over the country have been truly amazing. As you've heard from other panelists, school breakfast is the most important meal in an academic day—and the most underutilized school meal, with only 39% of California's low-income lunch participants benefiting from breakfast at school. Classroom breakfast, based upon direct certification that gathers all the eligible children, is a realistic and doable strategy to reach the President's goal of eliminating childhood hunger by 2015. The Student Breakfast and Education Improvement Act of 2009 (S.1480/H.R. 3277) proposes competitive grants to expand school breakfast participation.

- Congress should provide grants to school districts to move breakfast into the classroom or to another service model that occurs after the bell rings.

I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you. And let me tell you, my staff loves data, so don't worry about that. We love it.

Next, Mary?

STATEMENT OF MARY A. LAGNADO, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, WESTBURY UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Ms. LAGNADO. Good morning. I am Mary Lagnado—I didn't put the—okay, can you hear me now? Am I okay?

I am Mary Lagnado. Good morning. I am the assistant superintendent for Westbury Public Schools, and today I would like to acknowledge that I am accompanied by our president of the board of education, Karen Campbell, and our food service manager, Mike Ongus. And it is an honor to present to you today the Westbury School District's innovative strategies in providing a healthy breakfast and to help students raise alertness and performance.

The Westbury School District in Westbury, New York, began the Universal Breakfast Program as a pilot program in March 2009 with the goal of providing students with the proper nourishment to start their school day. The connection between nutrition and optimal learning has become increasingly clear, and the Westbury School District's commitment to this program is part of our overall mission to educate the whole child and help every child succeed.

We currently serve a population of 4,200 children, with four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Our demographics are such: 61 percent Hispanic; 35 percent Black; 2 percent White; 1.1 Asian; 0.3 multiracial; and 0.2 American Indian. Approximately one-third of our student body are English language learners.

Our free and reduced lunch rate is 84 percent. As you know, that is what denotes the percentage of families living at or below the poverty level.

With the current pilot program at the pre-K and the kindergarten levels, students are served a hot and cold breakfast in their classrooms, while at the elementary and secondary levels student who wish to participate eat a hot and cold breakfast in the cafeteria. As Congresswoman McCarthy has said, students are led directly by the school staff from their busses into the cafeterias to eat this breakfast.

We will fully implement the Breakfast on the Go program this coming November, and we are thrilled about it, with the goal of making breakfast accessible to every student. Under this program, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students will continue to eat breakfast in their classrooms while elementary-level students will receive the bagged or boxed breakfast upon existing their school bus to eat in their classrooms, and the other student at the secondary level will arrive by bus 15 minutes earlier to allow more time to eat their breakfast.

As a background, in 2004 an obesity study was performed in our schools—in our high school—by the school nurse which indicated that a majority of our high school students were overweight. To address the health eating solutions, the superintendent, the high school nurse, and I decided on a specific course of action and we formed the nutrition committee with the overall idea to affect a paradigm shift in the food served and selected in the school cafeterias through awareness and a district-wide commitment to helping students and the community—the idea of sustaining a balance in metabolism to permit sustained concentration and endurance for more effective and efficient student achievement is the heart of the purpose.

We formed an action plan, and what better to start with, the need of the day, breakfast. That was the aim of this nutrition committee.

We had a plan of action where we collected data, we visited the schools, we observed the food choices available in the cafeteria, we had vendors present nutritious choices for us to consider, we shared recommendations with the staff for changing the school menu not only to replace drinks and snacks with the more nutritious ones, but this is the following what we did: We replaced white flour bagels with whole wheat bagels, multigrain muffins, and non-sugar cereals. We reduced the portion of high-content carbohydrate foods and added fresh fruits and selections.

We also drafted our wellness policy, which included nutritional guidelines and had food choices for our board of education to approve. We also recognized that we needed to have different eating habits and include exercise.

In addition to this, we also started Family Nutrition Information Nights. These are held at night at our elementary schools, and the workshops are conducted by medical professionals. And one of these partnerships institutions is the Institute for Healthcare Disparities at the Nassau University Medical Center. A demonstration using cultural foods to prepare healthy meals and samples of healthy snacks as well as cookbooks in English were distributed, so we are really thinking out of the box.

In summary, the interesting thing is that nurses now—school nurses have reported that there has been a substantial increase in

awareness that nutrition has on students' health and performance. District data shows an improvement in the ELA and math scores on the New York State Assessment. Academic intervention strategies coupled with the Health Choice Initiative have resulted in this improvement.

Traditionally, students are more alert and engaged in morning classes in large measure due to the impact that these healthy choices have made in the overall wellbeing. Our high school principal has observed that students are less lethargic and more focused. In addition, building administrators have noted less disruptive behavior in the classrooms and the hallways.

So we are very pleased with the Breakfast on the Go program. We are going to institute it in November. We were very successful. The results were that we have increased our breakfast participation by 25 percent using this new initiative, and I just wanted to tell Congress how important this program is to a school like ours, which is a high-needs district, and we really use the funds.

What I would like to recommend is that districts be given more commodity foods that can be used in preparing the breakfast menus, and also that there would be an increase in the per-meal reimbursement to school districts as a financial incentive to school districts to make the program more financially feasible. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Lagnado follows:]

Prepared Statement of Mary A. Lagnado, Assistant Superintendent for Westbury UFSD, New York

WESTBURY SCHOOL DISTRICT'S "BREAKFAST ON THE GO" PROGRAM
GETS STUDENTS READY TO LEARN

The Westbury School District in Westbury, NY began the Universal Breakfast Program as a pilot program in March, 2009, with the goal of providing students with the proper nourishment to start their school day. The connection between nutrition and optimal learning has become increasingly clear, and the Westbury School District's commitment to this program is part of our overall mission to educate the whole child and help every child succeed. With the current pilot program, at the Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten levels, students are served a hot and cold breakfast in their classrooms, while at the Elementary and Secondary levels, students who wish to participate eat a hot or cold breakfast in their school cafeteria. (Students are led by school staff directly from the bus to eat breakfast.) Currently, at the Pre-K and Kindergarten levels, approximately 570 breakfasts are served daily, while at the Elementary level, 431 out of 1632 students participate, and at the Secondary level, 300 out of 1900 students participate. We will implement the "Breakfast on the Go" program in November, 2009, with the goal of making breakfast accessible to every student. Under this program, Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students will continue to eat breakfast in their classrooms, while Elementary levels students will receive a bagged or boxed breakfast upon exiting their school bus, to eat in the classrooms, and students at the Secondary level will arrive by school bus 15 minutes earlier to allow more time to eat breakfast in their school cafeteria.

Westbury Schools	Traditional Breakfast	"In the Classroom" Breakfast
Pre K-K	Served hot and cold; exit bus and go to classroom; aides assist with delivered bag breakfast; 570 served	Served hot and cold; exit bus and go to classroom; aides assist with delivered bag breakfast; 570 served
Elementary grades 1-5	Students who wish to participate eat in the cafeteria; 431 of 1632 served	Box/bag breakfast is delivered to the classroom; All 1632 served
Middle School Grades 6-8	Students who wish to participate eat in the cafeteria; 125 of 800 served	Box/bag breakfast is picked up before going to the classroom; All 800 served

Westbury Schools	Traditional Breakfast	"In the Classroom" Breakfast
High School Grades 9-12	Students who wish to participate eat in the cafeteria; 175 of 1100 served	All students participate and have greater choices in the cafeteria; 1100 served; Transportation scheduled for flexibility 15 minutes earlier creating a relaxed atmosphere

BACKGROUND

In 2004, a Wellness Committee was established with representatives from each of the district's six schools. An obesity study was performed at our High School by the school nurse that indicated that the majority of our high school students were overweight. To address the healthy eating solutions, the Superintendent, High School Nurse and I decided on a specific course of action. A Nutrition Committee was established with the overall idea to affect a paradigm shift in the foods served and selected in the school cafeterias and vending machines through awareness and a district-wide commitment to helping students and the community move away from carbohydrates, which turn to sugars in the digestive process, to foods that enhance activity and concentration. The idea of sustaining a balance in metabolism to permit sustained concentration and endurance for more effective and efficient student achievement in the physical and the academic areas is the heart of the purpose.

We first set our goals and did so by being one of the first to implement our District Wellness policy in accordance with the re-authorization act of 2004. Our next ingredient was to communicate. We achieved this by forming a district wide nutrition committee which consists of representatives from each of our schools, District Administrators, Students, as well as members of our community. This committee was charged with the task of monitoring the existing program, implementing any new programs and communicating our goals throughout the community. The committee also solicited new and exiting ways to introduce good nutrition as well as the importance of physical fitness and its part in making the body healthy. The group also reached out to local hospitals and organizations to help educate our families about proper nutrition.

Family nutrition information nights are being held. Parents participate in interactive workshops conducted by medical professionals through a partnership with The Institute for Healthcare Disparities at Nassau University Medical Center. A demonstration using cultural foods to prepare healthy meals and samples of health snacks, as well as cookbooks in English and Spanish are provided.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Student population—4,200 Pre-K—12, at four elementary schools, one middle school, and on high school—61% Hispanic, 35.4% Black, 2% White, 1.1% Asian, .3% Multiracial, .2% American Indian or Alaskan Native
 Free & Reduced Lunch—84%
 District Attendance—94%
 Graduation Rate—91% of which 80% are New York State Regents Diplomas
 The district employs 43 people in their Nutrition Program.
 Daily breakfasts served have increased from 985 to 1,240.

ACTION PLAN

We began by looking at food choices in our cafeteria. It started with the most important need of the day, breakfast. The Committee's Action Plan was the following:

- Data collection: The Committee Members visited each of the schools to observe the food choices available and children's eating habits.
- Invitations to vendors to present samples of more nutritious choices.
- Visiting schools to share recommendations with staff for changing the school breakfast menu, to not only replace drinks and snacks with more nutritious ones but to:
 - Replace white flour bagels with whole wheat bagels, multigrain muffins and non-sugar cereals.
 - Reduce the portion sizes of high content carbohydrate foods, and
 - Add fresh fruit selections.
 - Announcing a teacher led class contest to create a nutritional value chart for the cafeteria display to promote nutritional awareness.
 - Drafting a Wellness Policy which includes nutritional guidelines.

- Drafting a policy on Food Services Choices for approval by the Board of Education that would permit district-wide implementation of the recommended changes.
- Recognizing each school that makes substantial changes in eating habits and exercise.
- Recognizing the community member responsible for brining this endeavor to the attention of the local Lion's Club and Rotary Club who responded by supplying the involved grade levels with bushels of apples for field day.

SUMMARY

School nurses report that there has been a substantial increase in the awareness that nutrition has on being healthy and student performance. The district's population is 84% free and reduced lunch (denoting the percentage of families living at or below the poverty level). The majority of the students are English Language Learners. District data shows an improvement in the ELA and math scores of this population on the New York State Assessments. Academic intervention strategies are coupled with the Healthy Choices Initiative resulting in this improvement. Traditionally, students are more alert and participatory in the morning classes in large measure due to the impact that the healthy choices make on their metabolism from the breakfast. The secondary teachers see an improvement in the attendance rates in the afternoon classes and in the class participation of students in these classes.

All constituents agree that there has been a significant emphasis placed on food choices and exercise by the schools; that teachers are embedding discussion about nutritional ingredients and their effects on performance in their instruction; that Parent Workshops and Newsletters contain information on the components of Healthy Lifestyles: food choices and exercise; that administrators and teachers are making better choices as a result of serving as role models for the students and community, and that staff and parents are designing after-school support groups (exercise and diet clubs) for themselves and students.

In an effort to promote nutrition awareness and further demonstrate Westbury's commitment to the education of children on the importance of balanced nutrition and its direct correlation to learning, we implemented a pilot breakfast program. This program known as a "Universal Breakfast" provides a free "on the go" breakfast to each student in each school. This program was very successful and confirms our goal to provide accessibility to all students. Students are encouraged to arrive to school early to eat a healthy breakfast prior to the start of the instructional program so that they can be "fit" for learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To make this program more feasible for school districts, our recommendations to Congress are the following:

1. Give school districts more commodity foods that can be used in preparing breakfast meals.
2. Increase the per-meal reimbursement to school districts, as a financial incentive to school districts, and to make the program more financially feasible.

Ref: The literature is rich with reference to the effects of proper eating habits on school children's intelligence and academic performance (Bogden, J.F. Fit, healthy, and ready to learn: a school health policy guide. Alexandria, Va.: NASBE, 2000; Schoenthaler, S. Abstracts of early papers on the effects of vitamin mineral supplementation on IQ and behavior. Personality and Individual Difference 1991). There is also substantial evidence of the effects of improper diets on school achievement (American School Food association. Impact of hunger and malnutrition on student achievement. School Board Food Service Research Review 1989).

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you, Mary.
Mr. De Burgh?

STATEMENT OF RICHARD DE BURGH, PRESIDENT, DJ CO-OPS

Mr. DE BURGH. Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts, and members of the Subcommittee on Health Families and Communities, everything a food service director buys, except commodities, they buy what they want, from whom they want, when they want it, delivered where they want it. Why is it except commodities?

As examples, in California we used to receive frozen chicken from Arkansas. We would then send the chicken back to Arkansas to be

made into chicken nuggets and they would send it back to us to serve to schoolchildren.

In Michigan and Ohio they would receive cheese from Wisconsin. They would then pay to have the cheese sent back to Minnesota to be made into pizza and then sent back to them again.

Twenty years ago I led a group of 11 other directors and we fought for 3 years and, with the help of members of Congress, we were able to form a cooperative and receive direct delivery of our commodities, both to ourselves and to the processors we choose. We now hold over 1,000 school districts serving 2 million lunches a day. The districts range in size from over 37,000 to as small as 21.

In many states even today, the directors have no choice on where their commodities are processed. In fact, one state doesn't even process commodities.

In many states, commodities are delivered once a month to one location and each district must fund and provide a warehouse, a freezer, or a refrigerator and then transport those foods from the one location to all the schools in the district. Directors are forced to develop menus based on commodities rather than menus that customers want, which is one of the things that my colleague just referred to.

The cooperative system changes all of that. Because of the changes in the farm bill several years ago and changes in industry, we are now providing choices that are both healthy and customer-friendly. By April of each year, our member districts know where 95 percent of their commodities are going and when they are going to be delivered. They choose what they want and they are getting it.

For example, USDA provides chicken at least eight different ways. Our members can receive deliveries directly at each school or have it processed by processors into over 150 different items. In other words, we offer more choices than Starbucks does coffee.

Our purchasing contracts ask each vendor to agree to sell to our districts for the lowest price in the state. All except one have agreed to do that, and that one went bankrupt this year. We have returned over \$1 million in volume discounts to our local school districts. In fact, many of our members receive more money from us in volume discounts than they pay us to coordinate their commodities. This past year, for the first time, we tied our contracts to the commodity market and the commodity market went down and our prices were down significantly.

We provide fresher, more nutritious commodity items. This past year, with excellent support from USDA, we were able to implement a pilot project offering fresh sliced apples in individual packets to our districts. Pavel Matustik, who has testified before this committee, has an innovative food service program, and I worked for over 2 years to replicate the commercial delivery system for fresh produce using entitlement dollars.

The program was an overwhelming success in the eight states that piloted it, and hopefully we will be able to expand it to include carrots and oranges and grapes. Kids will eat sliced apples, where they will throw away a whole apple.

Stephen Ambrose, in his book on the construction of the Trans-america railroad, made an interesting observation. In the 18th cen-

ture, railroad barons were the wealthiest people in America. Today they don't exist.

The railroad barons should have considered themselves to be transportation innovators, not railroad barons. We need to do the same rethinking in commodity foods and distribution. Business as usual should become an unusual practice.

I am hopeful that this committee will assist us in allowing more innovation. How? I am glad you asked.

USDA has been innovative in allowing better business practices. These practices, such as allowing districts to form cooperatives and arrange direct delivery by their commercial distributors, should be permitted in all states.

All states receive federal money for state administrative expenses. Some of this money is earmarked for commodity distribution, but some states use it for other purposes. USDA delivers commodities by the truckload for free inside of a state. If a state does not distribute the commodities, there should be no charge. In California this charge amounts to \$5 million a year taken from local school districts.

Continue to encourage and expand substitutability. USDA is implementing a new technology to simplify and improve purchasing and distribution. Use this to review current business practices at the federal level, the state level, and the local level. If we were to redesign commodity distribution, it would look nothing like it started 60 years ago.

In closing, I would like to say our customer has changed. When I was growing up there were no chicken nuggets, there were no happy meals. Families ate at home.

Today more than 50 percent of the family's food budget is spent on food prepared outside the home. When a parent today says it is time for dinner many children don't know whether to run to the kitchen or the car.

We need innovation in the national school lunch program so that when a child is asked where do they want to go for dinner they will say, "School." Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. De Burgh follows:]

Prepared Statement of Richard De Burgh, President, DJ Co-Ops

Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts and Members of the Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities, everything a food service director buys, except commodities, is what they want, from whom they want, when they want it, delivered where they want it, by whom they want to deliver it. Why is it except commodities?

As examples, in California we would receive frozen chicken from Arkansas and pay to have it sent back to Arkansas to be made into chicken nuggets and sent back to us. In Michigan and Ohio they would receive cheese from Wisconsin and pay to have it sent to Minnesota to be made into pizza and returned to them. Twenty years ago I led a group of 11 other directors and we fought for 3 years and with the help of members of Congress were able to form a cooperative and receive direct delivery of our commodities. We now help over 1,000 school districts serving almost 2,000,000 lunches a day. The districts range in size from 37,575 lunches a day to as small as 21.

In many states, even today, the directors have no choice of where their commodities are processed. One state does not even allow processing. The commodities are delivered once a month to one location and each district must provide warehouse space and delivery to school locations. Directors are forced to develop menus based on commodities rather than menus that customers want.

The cooperative system changes all of that. Because of the changes in the farm bill several years ago and changes in industry we are now providing choices that are both healthy and customer friendly. By April of each year, our member districts know where 95% of their commodities for the next school year are being delivered. They choose what they want and when they are getting it.

As an example, USDA offers chicken in at least 8 different ways. Our members can receive deliveries directly at each school or have it processed by any of over 7 processors into over 150 different items. The same is true of beef, cheese and many other commodities. In other words, USDA offers as many chicken choices as Starbucks does coffee!

Our purchasing contracts ask each vendor to agree to sell to our districts for the lowest price offered in the state. All except one have agreed and that one filed for bankruptcy this school year. Because we make the purchasing contracts easier for the manufacturers, we provided over \$1,000,000 in volume discounts to our members this past school year. This is on top of the lowest prices in the state. In fact many of our members receive more money from us in volume discounts than they pay us to coordinate their commodities.

We can provide fresher more nutritious commodity items. This past year with excellent support from USDA, we were able to implement a pilot project offering fresh, sliced apples in individual packets to our districts. Pavel Matustik (who has testified before this committee) and I worked for over 2 years to replicate the commercial delivery system used for fresh produce using entitlement dollars. The program was an overwhelming success and hopefully will be expanded to include carrots, oranges and grapes.

The districts in the co-op can trade with other districts in the co-op. When menus are changed, food orders can also be changed.

Stephen Ambrose in his book on the construction of Transamerica railroad made an interesting observation. In the 19th century railroad barons were the wealthiest people in America. Today they do not exist. The railroad barons should have considered themselves transportation innovators not railroad barons. We need to do the same rethinking in commodity food purchasing and distribution. Business as usual should become an unusual practice.

I am hopeful that this committee will assist us in allowing more innovation. How? I'm glad you asked. USDA has been innovative in allowing better business practices. These practices such as allowing districts to form cooperatives and arrange direct delivery by their commercial distributors should be permitted in all states.

All states receive federal money for state administrative expenses. Some of this money is earmarked for commodity distribution but states use it for other purposes. USDA delivers the commodities by the truckload for free. If a state does not distribute the commodities there should be no charge. In California this charge amounts to five million dollars taken from local school districts.

Continue to encourage substitutability. When a distributor or processor can certify to USDA that an item is of the same quality as the USDA specifications and is of American origin substitution should be allowed.

USDA is implementing new technology in WEBSCAM to simplify and improve purchasing and distribution. When this is up and running a review of current business practices should be implemented from the federal to the state to the district level to see what improvements and innovations could be made.

In closing I would like to say our customer has changed. When I was growing up there were no chicken nuggets, there were no happy meals, families ate at home. Today more than 50% of the family food budget is spent on food prepared outside the home. When a parent today says dinner is ready many children do not know if they should run to the kitchen or the car! We need innovation in the national school lunch program so that when the child is asked where they want to go for dinner their answer is school!

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you very much for that information. Appreciate it.

Ms. Yargar-Reed?

**STATEMENT OF DEBORAH YARGAR-REED, PHYSICAL
EDUCATION TEACHER, BIGLERVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Ms. YARGAR-REED. Thank you, Chairman McCarthy and members of the subcommittee for inviting me to testify today. I want

to offer a special thank you to Ranking Member Todd Platts, my school's local congressman.

More time in front of the television and computer screens and less at play coupled with increase calorie intake are packing the pounds on today's youth. In the Upper Adams School District we wanted to meet this challenge head on, and therefore we have come up with various strategies and programs to implement new ideas of physical activity and nutrition into our students' daily routine.

The Upper Adams School District is located in rural South Central Pennsylvania, which covers a geographical area of 90 square miles. The approximate population of the residents is 10,000. The size of the school district itself is 1,729 students, which encompasses five schools—three elementary, one middle school, and a high school.

In 2006 I attended the Wellness Institute at Dixon University. Requirements for this class included the creation and implementation of a wellness project within the Upper Adams School District. This policy became our district's Local Wellness Plan, as required by the 2004 Nutrition Act, and we began implementation of this plan in the 2006-2007 school year.

Activities which have developed out of the wellness plan include a monthly event which engages the students and staff in physical activity and nutrition. A few of these events include a tailgate activity, which promotes school spirit, physical activity, and nutrition for all students to participate followed by a healthy snack of fruits and vegetables.

The tailgate activity takes place in September. After the children have participated in their football challenges, they have a snack consisting of fruits and vegetables and the parents have provided the snack for the students.

In Apple Crunch, schools across Pennsylvania celebrate the Great American Apple Crunch. The event was organized by Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity, better known as PANA. At this even, local fruit farmers in our area donate the apples.

Go Green: a statewide celebration that takes place in March that helps schools and communities focus on the important role of vegetables as part of a healthy diet. This event is held in partnership with Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and supports National Nutrition Month.

Market Basket of the Month brings together the school cafeteria, classrooms, home, and community through a strategic effort to promote healthy habits for students. Wellspan provides this opportunity for our school district. We are currently one of six school districts across Pennsylvania who have been selected to implement this Market Basket program.

Taste Testing is a favorite event for the students. It is food sampling, better known as "the polite bite." Students are encouraged to try a new fruit of vegetable and then asked to go home and share the experience with their family. Examples of some of the fruits sampled have been kiwi, star fruit, mango, pomegranate, just to name a few.

I am pleased to share with you changes that have been implemented in our school cafeteria as a result of the collaborative na-

ture of the Local Wellness Plan. Rather than serve whole milk, students may choose from 1 percent or fat-free milk. White bread is something of the past; sandwiches are served either on bread or rolls which are multigrain or wheat.

A change has been made from potato chips to the baked chip. Rather than serve students baked goods daily, the cafeteria has done away with that and now serves fruit—fresh fruit or canned.

Our district has created a School Health Advisory Council networking forum to oversee the wellness policy implementation. Our committee consists of school administrators, physical education teacher, health teacher, family consumer science teacher, school nurse, food service personnel, parents, guidance counselor, and representatives from Wellspan, which is our local health care organization.

Initially the Advisory Council was created to advise and recommend nutrition standards to the school board and administrations through our wellness policy. The first task of the council was to draft a written wellness policy. Now that the draft has been accepted, the Advisory Council makes recommendations on activities to the school board, such as the PANA activities, that the individual schools participate in. The Advisory Council also reviews potential school fundraisers to ensure they fall within the wellness plan.

The Advisory Council meets four to five times a year. To date, the recommendations of the Advisory Council have been received with mixed reaction. We have experienced different levels of support through the district for our efforts.

In closing, study after study proves what educators have long believed to be true: When a child's basic nutrition and fitness needs are met they have the cognitive energy to learn and achieve. Schools continue to be a core place for students to learn and practice healthy eating habits and can also be a primary place to gain the knowledge, motivation, and skills children need for lifelong physical activity.

Schools are in a unique position to address children's eating habits and be instrumental in efforts to reduce childhood obesity because of the significant amount of time that children spend in school and the number of children enrolled. We are trying to make the students aware of this each day as we promote the healthy choices and physical activity in fun and creative ways.

I feel that on a local level we have made a real difference in the lives of our students by making them aware that small changes they do can be healthy. My job is to offer education to enlighten students what small steps are possible, like drinking 1 percent milk or going for a walk with their parents after dinner instead of sitting in front of the television. These decisions can make a big difference in their overall health, and therefore their life.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The statement of Ms. Yargar-Reed follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Deborah Yargar-Reed, Physical Education Teacher,
Biglerville Elementary School**

Thank you Chairwoman McCarthy, and members of the Subcommittee, for inviting me to testify today. I want to offer a special thank you to Ranking Member Todd Platts, my school's local Congressman.

Across the nation, obesity is on the rise in both children and adults, taking a toll on our quality of life. The prevalence of obesity among children aged 6 to 11 more than doubled in the past 28 years, going from 6.5% in 1980 to over 17.0% in 2008.

Obesity is the result of caloric imbalance (too few calories expended for the amount of calories consumed). Obese youth are more likely to have risk factors for cardiovascular disease, bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, social/psychological problems and lower academic achievements.

More time in front of the television and computer screens and less at play, coupled with increased calorie intake, are packing the pounds on today's youth. In the Upper Adams School District we wanted to meet this challenge head on and therefore we have come up with various strategies and programs to implement new ideas of physical activity and nutrition into our student's daily routine.

The Upper Adams School District is located in rural South Central Pennsylvania, and covers a geographical area of 90 square miles. The approximate population of the area is 10,000 residents. The size of the school district itself is 1,729 students which encompasses 5 schools (3 elementary, 1 middle school and a high school). Each year the Body Mass Index (BMI) is measured of each student within the district. I would like to share the statistics for the past 2 school years.

In the 2008-2009 school year there were 891 elementary students enrolled:

- 26 students had a BMI under the 5th percentile;
- 123 students had a BMI in the 85th—95th percentile, putting them in the “at risk” category; and
- 208 students had a BMI greater than the 95th percentile, putting them in the “obese” category.

In the 2007-2008 school year there were 898 elementary students enrolled:

- 18 students had a BMI under the 5th percentile;
- 163 students had a BMI in the 85th—95th percentile, “putting them in the “at risk” category; and
- 202 students had a BMI greater than the 95th percentile, putting them in the “obese” category.

In 2006, I attended the Wellness Institute at Dixon University. Requirements for the class included the creation and implementation of a wellness project within the Upper Adams School District. This policy became our district's Local Wellness Plan, as required by the 2004 Child Nutrition Act, and we began implementation of the plan in the 2006-2007 school year.

Activities, which have developed out of the Wellness plan, include a monthly event which engages the students and staff in physical activity and or nutrition. A few of these events include:

Jump rope for heart—thirty minutes of “physical activity” daily. An event which raises money for the American Heart Association.

Tailgate activity—to promote school spirit, physical activity and nutrition for all students to participate, followed by a healthy snack of fruits and vegetables. The tailgate activity takes place in September. All students are encouraged to wear their favorite football jersey on tailgate day. The students engage in football related physical activities such as passing a football, running and carrying a football, and punting a football. After all the students have played their football challenges they are then given healthy snacks which consists of fresh fruits (grapes, watermelon, apples, oranges, cantaloupe) and vegetables (carrots, cucumbers, broccoli) as well as 100% fruit juice. Parents provide the healthy snack for the students to enjoy.

Apple crunch—schools across Pennsylvania celebrate the Great American Apple Crunch. This event was organized by the Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA). (PANA works with schools to help promote healthy eating and physical activity to prevent child obesity.) At this event, local fruit farmers in the area donate apples.

Go Greens—a statewide celebration that takes place in March that helps schools and communities focus on the important role of vegetables as part of a healthy diet. The event is held in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and it supports National Nutrition Month and the consumption of Pennsylvania produce.

All Children Exercise Simultaneously (ACES)—by gubernatorial proclamation, the first Wednesday in May is the state's annual Keystone Healthy Zone Event Day,

which also coincides with the worldwide observance of ACES day to promote good fitness habits.

Family Fitness—a monthly evening program designed for students and their families to come out and exercise and participate in scheduled activities and share a healthy snack.

Market Basket of the Month—brings together the school cafeteria, classrooms, home and community through a strategic effort to promote healthy habits for students. Objectives include knowledge and familiarity with a variety of fruits and vegetables as well as participation in daily physical activity. Wellspan provides this opportunity for our school district. We are currently one of six school districts across PA who have been selected to implement this Market Basket program.

A Family in Motion—This project is part of our Growing Healthy Kids School Partnership with Wellspan Health. The healthy Fitness Zone School Partnership programs are designed to help young children get into the habit of being physically active. The program features a backpack filled with fun activity ideas and equipment for family activity time and help children develop motor skills. The backpack is taken home with each student for a one week timeframe.

Eat Smart Play Hard—an educational two-part series program presented by Wellspan. The ABC's of healthy eating (Adjust portion size, Be a label reader and Choose more healthful foods). Participants help to prepare a sampling of healthy foods. Bring your sneakers—we are on the move is part two of the series. These are creative ways to decrease screen time and get the family moving.

Culminating activity—the students went on a field trip to the local grocery store. This helped support nutrition principles that focus on the importance of making sensible food choices to build a healthy body. Students also became familiar with how to read a food label.

Taste Test—a favorite event for the students is food sampling, better known as the polite bite. Students are encouraged to try a new fruit or vegetable and then asked to go home and share that experience with their family. Examples of fruits sampled include: kiwi, star fruit, mango, pomegranate just to name a few.

I am pleased to share with you changes that have been implemented in our school cafeteria, as a result of the collaborative nature of the Local Wellness Plan. Rather than serve whole milk students may choose from 1% or fat free milk. White bread is something of the past. When sandwiches are served either on bread or rolls they are now multi-grain or wheat. A change has been made from potato chips to the “baked chip.” Rather than serve students baked goods daily the cafeteria has done away with that and serves fresh fruit or canned fruit. Baked goods are now a “WHOA” food in our cafeterias. Snacks that the students may purchase after finishing their lunch are healthier selections as well.

The cafeteria has posted the following signs around for the students to have a better understanding of “GO,” “SLOW,” and “WHOA” foods. Teaching the students this concept will help them make smarter food choices:

- “GO” foods are those that can be eaten almost anytime;
- “SLOW” foods are those that should only be eaten sometimes (at most only several times a week); and
- “WHOA” foods are those that should only be eaten once in a while or on special occasions.

Classroom teachers are no longer using candy as a positive reinforcement for those students who finish their homework or complete various tasks that are asked of the students. Rather a reward these days may be extra recess time.

Our District has created a School Health Advisory Council networking forum to oversee the wellness policy implementation. Our committee consists of school administrators, physical education teachers, health teachers, family & consumer science teacher, school nurse, food service personnel, parents, guidance counselors, and representatives from Wellspan Organization (our local health care system).

Initially the Advisory Council was created to advise and recommend nutrition standards to the school board and administrators through the wellness policy. The first task of the council was to create a draft wellness policy. Now that the draft was accepted, the Advisory Council makes recommendations on activities to the school board, such as the PANA activities that individual schools participate in. The Advisory Council also reviews potential school fundraisers to ensure they fall within the wellness plan. The Advisory Council meets 4 or 5 times each year. To date, therecommendations of the Advisory Council have been received with mixed reactions. We have experienced different levels of support throughout the district for our efforts to focus on nutrition and physical activity.

The Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity, known as PANA or more recently as NRG Balance, sponsors an annual campaign to recognize Pennsylvania schools and community centers for their work and commitment to “make

healthyeasy” for the youth they serve. The campaign provides resources, materials, and training to help schools improve nutrition and physical activity. Biglerville Elementary School has been a member of this campaign since the 2004-2005 school year. Biglerville has taken part in a number of PANA activities through this campaign, including the Annual Webcast, Great Apple Crunch, and Go for the Greens.

There are also professional development opportunities for the staff to participate in, including attending the Keystone Health Promotion Conference as well as the yearly Pennsylvania State Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (PSAHPERD) conference. New ideas and insight is gained to share with the staff and students in the area of Health and Wellness at these conferences.

Change is not always a welcome initiative. However, in the Upper Adams School District we feel that if we keep plugging away and making contacts with various local personnel, and resources such as Wellspan, Penn State Extension offices, just to name a few, and continue to find funding through grant writing opportunities, we can maintain the path to wellness for our students. Of course, we have experienced some negative response to the suggestion of “healthier” choices, but that is becoming a thing of the past as we continue to promote the healthy choices.

In closing, study after study proves what educators have long believed to be true: when a child’s basic nutritional and fitness needs are met, they have the cognitive energy to learn and achieve. Schools continue to be a core place for students to learn and practice healthy eating habits, and can also be a primary place to gain the knowledge, motivation, and skills children need for lifelong physical activity. Schools are in a unique position to address children’s eating habits and be instrumental in efforts to reduce childhood obesity because of the significant amount of time that children spend in school and the number of children enrolled in schools. Schools can impact children’s eating habits through the foods offered, classroom health education presented and the messages students receive throughout the school environment. It is imperative students learn to live a healthy lifestyle.

We are trying to make the students aware of this each day as we promote the healthy choices and physical activity in fun and creative ways. I feel that on a local level we have made a real difference in the lives of our students by making them aware that there are small changes they can do to be healthy. My job is to offer education to enlighten students that small steps are possible, like drinking 1% milk or going for a walk with their parents after dinner instead of sitting in front of the television. These decisions can make a big difference in their overall health and, therefore, their life.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today and I look forward to your questions.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you.

Tony?

Could you put your mic on?

STATEMENT OF ANTHONY GERACI, DIRECTOR, FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES, BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mr. GERACI. Thank you for having me here, and thank you Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts, and all of the committee members. My name is Tony Geraci. I am a chef. I am the food service director for the Baltimore City public schools system, and I am here because my clients demand it. These are my clients behind me.

I work for 85,000 kids, and these kids are sort of a living, breathing testimony of like how a schoolhouse rock program works. These guys used the U.S. Constitution to create a cafeteria bill of rights that simply demanded to have real food, fresh food every day.

They went to the school board. They brought the then current school lunches and said, “You guys eat this,” and nobody would eat them. And then they said, “So what is your expectation, then, that we should eat this stuff?”

And because of that, the catalyst of change happened. I was hired; I was brought in. And so, you know, the real story here is our kids, all right?

So we spend \$174 billion, with a “b,” dollars every year fighting type two diabetes in this country. And I grew up in a generation where polio just about ravaged this planet, and we as a planet decided that we were going to do something about it and we changed that, and we just about eradicated that.

One in every three children born after the year 2000 will contract this disease. One in two African American or children of color will contract this disease. This is preventable. This is something that we can change.

And the good news is, we can change this. We will change this. And in Baltimore we are doing some very specific things to change this.

So we took this 33-acre abandoned orphanage that was founded by a slave in the 1880s and we recreated it as the Great Kids Farm. As a chef I know the single most powerful tool to teach children about food is to reconnect them with food, all right? So if you give a kid an opportunity to plant a seed and they walk down this long line of tomatoes that they have just grown and they pluck a cherry tomato from a vine that is still warm from the summer sun and they plop that in their mouth and that flavor explodes, that is a moment you can’t teach in a book; that is a moment that can only be experienced.

And it is also a moment that forever changes the way a kid looks at food. It is no longer a consumptive thing, all right? They learn so much more. They learn about stewardship; they learn about the connection of who we are to the earth, to the planet, to the place that we live, you know? And so our Great Kids Farm has been this great transformation tool to help our kids to understand about healthy eating.

We have done some pretty innovative things this year in our menu mix. We are the first school district in the nation to offer meatless Mondays, right? You know, and look, I have an unholy love of pork, all right? So this is not about denying people meat. This is about beginning a conversation about alternatives, beginning a conversation about change, and also having an opportunity to expose our kids to different cultures.

Look, you know, there are great, you know, plant-based menus in all cultures, you know? Meat was a luxury not too long ago, you know? So the kids like it. It has been a lot of fun.

We also recognize that breakfast is the single most important meal of the day, and as a chef I go to my pantry and I open the doors of my pantry and I look inside, and what I have are birds, right? I have ravens and orioles, right?

So there is no sort of secret that, like, I created these Baltimore Raven purple breakfast boxes and, you know, Baltimore Orioles orange breakfast boxes and inside we have the lowest-sugar cereals on the market, 100 percent juice, and a whole grain snack that is free of dyes and preservatives. And we do this—it is shelf-stable—and we do this so our kids can have grab-and-go breakfasts, breakfast in the classroom, second chance breakfast, you know?

I also, on the inside of these boxes, one in 20 of these boxes has a little secret code and there is a prize, right? And I know it is real Pavlovian the way we did this thing, because in the beginning they were tearing open the boxes looking for the prize, and those prizes are, you know, mp3 players, DVDs, Ravens tickets, Orioles tickets, roller skating passes, whatever swag I could pull together to make this thing work. But we went from serving 8,500 breakfasts a day to 35,000 breakfasts a day in less than 60 days. It worked, all right?

And, you know, and our kids have been, you know, powerful agents of change in Baltimore, and I am not going to take much more time. I want to pass it over to Alison, and she has a very compelling story and I am glad that we are here, but I think we all need to keep the focus on what this is about.

It is about them, you know? This is an amazing place. I am a first-generation American, and it is because of opportunity that we can provide with great nutrition for our kids that this country will continue to be great.

Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Geraci follows:]

Prepared Statement of Anthony Geraci, Director of Food and Nutrition Services, Baltimore City Public Schools

Good morning, Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts and members of the Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities. My name is Tony Geraci, and I am Director of Food and Nutrition Services for Baltimore City Public Schools.

So why are we here today?

We are here because as we speak America's youth are on a collision course with poor health and chronic disease, the prevalence of which our country has never seen before.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2007, 13 percent of high school students were obese and by 2006, the rate of obesity among 6- to 11-year-olds was at 17 percent. As a result, incidence of type 2 diabetes—a disease closely linked with obesity—is on the rise, requiring more than \$174 billion worth of treatment each year. If current trends continue, every third child born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes within his or her lifetime. This is not what we want for our kids, but the good news is that, as a nation, we can fix this, and we are fixing this in Baltimore.

In Baltimore—a city where 37 percent of public high school students are overweight or at risk of becoming so and 27.5 percent of children live below the poverty line—many of our public school students hated the meals our school system served.

A small group of students, some of them in the room right now, insisted on something better. Inspired by the U.S. Constitution, they worked with their social studies teacher to draft a Cafeteria Bill of Rights, challenged our school board to eat what they were expected to eat every day and met with the head of our school system to talk about changes.

Their work led to much of the following.

We now provide fresh fruit with every lunch we serve. All over Baltimore, students are learning what an actual, locally grown peach tastes like instead of some synthesized peach flavoring. And as of this school year all of the peaches, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers—all of our fruits and vegetables—come from Maryland farms. We were intentional in getting as much of our food as possible from local sources because we believe that the local tax dollars that support our school system should circulate and multiply among those very taxpayers. This also means that fewer ingredients make long trips—at great cost to the environment and those tax dollars—over hundreds of miles.

Due in part to those cost savings our more than 80,000 students now have access to fresh fruits and vegetables every school day. Last school year we could guarantee fresh fruit just one day per week.

In 2008, we opened Great Kids Farm, a working organic farm and education center that trains future urban farmers and informed citizens. The site that hosts Great Kids Farm was once an abandoned orphanage founded by a former slave.

George Freeman Bragg opened the Maryland home for Friendless Colored Children as a place of opportunity for young black men, a place where they could learn trade skills that would help them be self-sufficient. Over the years, it has had many different incarnations—a segregated school, a nature center, and, before Great Kids Farm, 33 abandoned acres. Filled with the spirit and vision of George Bragg, community members from throughout Baltimore felt it was important to deliver on his original promise. Our vision was to use the farm to connect kids to the origins of food and the resulting agriculture and hospitality jobs associated with it.

Today at Great Kids Farm, children are raising bees, goats, and chicken; using organic farming techniques to grow tomatoes, lettuce, greens and mushrooms; and exploring a few dozen acres of woods, streams and trails. We welcome students on day-long field trips by the busload and train students in-depth. Our Farm to Fork Summer Internship is an eight-week, hands-on course, during which students learn about every aspect of the food supply chain from cultivation to harvesting, marketing, delivery, and, finally, cooking and presentation at premiere local restaurants.

Long outsourced, we're quickly bringing many aspects of food procurement, processing and distribution back in house. Thanks to a \$1.3 million gift from the Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association, we have a fleet of nine refrigerated trucks and milk coolers in all of our schools.

Taking a cue from McDonald's, we introduced not a Happy Meal box but a Healthy Meal Box to our breakfast program: Kids rip open a slickly designed package containing a low-sugar cereal, 100-percent fruit juice, a carton of milk and a whole-grain, high-protein snack. They also have a chance to meet some of their professional sports heroes from the National Football League's Baltimore Ravens and Major League Baseball's Baltimore Orioles. Within two months, participation in our breakfast program increased four-fold.

We're treating kids like the savvy consumers they are with "No Thank You Bites," one-to-two-ounce servings of items we'd like to consider incorporating into the menu. If a student likes what she tries, great. If not, she simply says, "No thank you." But everyone who works with us to expand their palettes and their minds is rewarded and we listen to their suggestions.

Baltimore has done all of this with a few big ideas, under severe budget constraints, and with strong community support. But how can the federal government help make this type of work possible nation-wide?

Congress can do so by implementing the six recommendations of the National Farm to School Network as it considers reauthorization of federal child nutrition programs.

1. Guarantee funding for competitive, one-time grants that will help schools develop their own farm to cafeteria projects—menus, procurement, and educational and promotional materials that get local produce into schools.

2. Increase the reimbursement rate for all child nutrition programs in line with actual costs.

3. Apply the same high nutritional standards to all foods and beverages sold within schools, even those not covered by the United States Department of Agriculture's school meals program.

4. Encourage purchasing of local fruits and vegetables through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

5. Incorporate language changes in existing Child Nutrition Reauthorization feeding programs to promote increased local food purchasing.

6. Provide mandatory and consistent funding for the Team Nutrition Network to enable a consistent and coordinated nutrition education approach across child nutrition programs.

We need to bring America's kids back to the table, to put them back in touch with honest-to-goodness, un-messed-around-with food; in touch with the earth and the resources that make real food possible; with the wonderful things their bodies can do in clean, open spaces; with each other; and with adults—their parents, grandparents, teachers and neighbors—because food is something that touches us all in the same ways.

Thank you.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you, Tony.

Well, Alice, looks like it is your turn, and Tony has just put a lot on your plate.

**STATEMENT OF ALICE SHEEHAN, 8TH GRADE STUDENT, CITY
NEIGHBORS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL**

Ms. SHEEHAN. Thank you.

Hello, my name is Alice Sheehan and I am a spokesperson for my school's lunch committee. Thank you for inviting us here today, and I am delighted that I have the chance to speak up and help improve the school in our—the food in our school system.

I have been working to solve this problem for over 3 years. Even before I came into the picture, however, other students began to bring attention to the abysmal quality of Baltimore City's pre-plated school lunches.

Together, we have worked to get rid of the overcooked, tasteless, and just plain disgusting food in our schools. Coming here and telling you about our experience in Baltimore means we are on our way to getting nutritious and delicious breakfasts and lunches for all American children.

Our story started with the endless grumbling about lunches at school. Tired of complaints and just ready for action, our student council and others together took samples of our prepackaged lunch down to Baltimore City School Board to demonstrate what it would be like to eat this every day. If this is what they feed us, we said, they should have to eat it too.

The board turned up its nose—no thanks. But the deed was done. We had started acting and not just complaining.

A year later, Mr. French, my social studies teacher, suggested starting a lunch committee that included Justus Grier, Zachary Carter, a few others, and myself. The committee had two goals. First, we worked out a cafeteria plan of action and a cafeteria bill of rights. We wrote out point by point what we needed for healthy and tasty lunches.

The bill of rights included the right to a nutritious and delicious food for breakfast and lunch, the right to fresh fruit and fresh vegetables every day, the right to choose more than one main selection each day, and the right to give back feedback and have input on the quality and selections made and have our input be given serious consideration.

The plan of action was to put a kitchen and cooking staff in each Baltimore City school, end pre-plated lunches, and immediately begin surveying students on how they feel about their cafeteria means and for the school system to use this information in future planning and purchasing.

Second, we decided we had to know more, not just about our school but about all of the schools. So we prepared an experiment and invited the Baltimore Sun to observe. We made an expedition to sample lunches. In the end we had three: one from our school, which had only pre-plated and packaged food; one from the Hamilton Elementary School, which had its own kitchen; and one from a Baltimore County school, whose food came from outside the city district altogether.

The difference was clear: Our food was by far the worst. And no surprise that the county's food was the best—their school system is wealthier than Baltimore City public schools. People with more money are getting better, tastier food, and the unfairness of this made us mad.

The Sun caught on fast. They took pictures and wrote them up for the next week's news.

Now, with our results in hand and the press on the case, we went downtown to confront the now former director of food and nutrition at the schools. She was hopping mad about the article. Even so, she told us that our hands were tied and the city was bound by its contracts. Plus, the food you eat, she said, is both nutritious and delicious. We disagreed, and we weren't going to take no for an answer.

So we went to the top, to Dr. Andres Alonso, the superintendent of the Baltimore City public schools. We gave him our cafeteria bill of rights and told him of our expectations for a better and healthier school lunch system.

He was sympathetic with our cause and admitted how much he disliked the prepackaged food at his own cafeteria. He said he would do something about it and he did. The new director of food and nutrition, Dr. Geraci, has been working hard to improve our lunches ever since, but we think there is still work to be done.

First, we need healthy food that kids will actually eat. If adults won't eat it, then why should kids? Everybody deserves to have fresh, tasty, and yummy food.

If possible, why not make it local food? Why buy apples from Washington State when you can get them right here in Maryland at a cheaper price? We should think about our meals not as nutritional packages but as food that people like and want to eat, with fresh ingredients and tasting like it should.

Second, our experiment showed that at the present, school districts with the most underserved kids get the worst food. This is unfair. The same kids who are already struggling to eat good meals at home are getting inferior meals at school.

All kids need to eat well, if they live in Baltimore City or Baltimore County. The city of Baltimore may always be poorer than the county, but the city could spend its money better on healthier and tastier foods rather than on expensive prepackaged junk.

Third, waste: Right now, if you go to our cafeteria you find in the trash can at least half the lunches are uneaten and thrown away. What is eaten is the fresh fruit, the sweets, and the bread. Not a good lunch nor a good use of the school's money.

If people get free or reduced-cost lunch and just throw it away it is just like throwing money right down the drain. Lunch is more often an experiment—how hard are those mashed potatoes? Did the meatloaf just move? None of this helps kids at all.

The point is, we need to serve healthy food that kids will eat. Why not ask kids to help plan the menus? Why not design lunches with kids so that they eat their food every day?

I am a kid who does not buy lunch all the time, and I am lucky to have another option. But most kids can't bring their lunch, or if they do it is either small or not very good for them. On days I do buy lunch and eat it all—not very common—I am usually still hungry afterwards.

In my experience, then, school lunches are neither delicious nor nutritious, and not even very filling. We can do better and we should, and with the help of Congress we will. Thank you for lis-

tening to me on behalf of the children of the United States. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Sheehan follows:]

Prepared Statement of Alice Sheehan, 8th Grade Student, Baltimore City Public Schools

Hello, My name is Alice Sheehan and I am the spokesperson for my school's lunch committee. Thank you for inviting us here today. I am delighted that I have the chance to speak up and help improve the food in our school systems. I have been working to solve this problem for over 3 years. Even before I came into the picture, other students began to bring attention to the abysmal quality of Baltimore City's pre-plated, school lunches. Together we have worked to get rid of the overcooked, tasteless, and just plain disgusting food in our schools. Coming here and telling you about our experience in Baltimore means that we are on our way to guaranteeing nutritious and delicious breakfasts and lunches for all American children.

Our story started with the endless grumbling about lunches at school. Tired of the complaints and ready for action, our student council and others together took samples of our prepackaged lunch down to the Baltimore City School Board to demonstrate what it would be like to eat this every day. If that is what they feed us, we said, they should have to eat it too. The Board turned up its nose: no thanks! But the deed was done: we had started acting and not just complaining.

A year later, Mr. French, my Social Studies teacher, suggested starting a lunch committee that included Justus Grier, Zachary Carter, a few others, and myself. The committee had two goals. First, we worked out a Cafeteria Plan of Action and a Cafeteria Bill of Rights. We wrote out point by point what we needed for tasty and healthy lunches. The Bill of Rights included:

- The right to nutritious and delicious food for breakfast and lunch
- The right to fresh fruit and fresh vegetables each day
- The right to choose more than one main selection each day
- The right to give feedback and have input on the quality and selections made and have our input be given serious consideration

The Plan of Action was to put a kitchen and cooking staff in each Baltimore City School, end pre-plated lunches, to immediately begin surveying students on how they feel about their cafeteria meals and for the school system use this information in future planning and purchasing

Second, we decided that we had to know more, not just about our school, but ALL the schools. So we prepared an experiment, and we invited the Baltimore Sun to observe. We made an expedition to sample lunches. In the end, we had three: one from our school, which had only pre-plated and packaged food; one from the Hamilton public school, which had its own kitchen; and one from a Baltimore county school, whose food came from outside the city district altogether. The difference was clear: our food was by far the worst. And no surprise that the County's food was the best: their school system is wealthier than the Baltimore City's Public Schools. People with more money are getting better, tastier food, and the unfairness of this made us mad. The Sun caught on fast: they took pictures and wrote them up for the next week's news.

With our results in hand, and the press on the case, we went downtown to confront the (now former) director of food and nutrition at the schools. She was hopping mad about the article. Even so, she told us that her hands were tied and that the city was bound by its contracts. Plus, the food you eat, she said, is both nutritious AND delicious.

We disagreed. And we weren't going to take no for an answer.

So we went to the top, to Dr. Andres Alonso, the Superintendent of the Baltimore City Public Schools. And we gave him our Cafeteria Bill of Rights, and told him of our expectations for a better and healthier school lunch system. He was sympathetic with our cause, and admitted how much he disliked the pre-packaged food at his own cafeteria. He said he would do something about it. And he did. The NEW director of food and nutrition Dr. Geraci has been working hard to improve our lunches ever since.

But we think there is still work to be done. First, we need healthy food that kids actually will eat! If adults won't eat it, then why should kids? Everybody deserves to have fresh, tasty and yummy food. If possible, why not make it local food? Why buy apples from Washington State when you can get them right here in Maryland at a cheaper price? We should think about our meals not as nutritional packages, but as food that people like and want to eat, with fresh ingredients and tasting like it should.

Second, our experiment showed that, at the present, school districts with the most underserved kids get the worst food. This is unfair. The same kids who already are struggling to eat good meals at home, are getting inferior meals at school. ALL kids need to eat well, if they live in Baltimore City or in Baltimore County. The city of Baltimore may always be poorer than the county, but the city could spend its money better, on healthier and tastier foods, rather than on expensive prepackaged junk.

Third, waste. Right now, if you go to our cafeteria, you find in the trash can, at least half of the lunches are uneaten and thrown away. What is eaten, is the fresh fruit, the sweets, and the bread. Not a good lunch. Nor a good use of the school's money! If people get free or reduced-cost lunch and just throw it away, it is just like throwing money right down the drain. Lunch is more often an experiment—how hard are those mashed potatoes? Did the meatloaf just move? None of this helps kids at all. The point is, that we need to serve healthy food that kids will eat. Why not ask kids to help plan the menus? Why not design lunches with kids, so that they eat their food every day?

I am a kid who does not buy lunch all that often, and I am lucky to have another option. But most kids can't bring their lunch, or if they do it is either small or not very good for them. On days when I do buy lunch and eat it all (not very common!) I am usually still hungry afterwards. In my experience, then, school lunches are neither delicious nor nutritious, and not even very filling. We can do better. And we should. And with the help of the Congress, we will. Thank you for listening to me on behalf of the children of the United States.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you.

I want to thank everybody. The testimony obviously shows that everyone in front of us cares a great deal about our children and the future of this nation. We need to bring the context of food—healthy food for our children because they are our future, and if we don't take care of the children now, where are we going to be 20, 30 years from now? And that is what hopefully this committee will be able to make a big difference in the children's lives.

Alice, I want to thank you for taking that up, and certainly, Tony, for you listening to them due to their persistence. And having, you know—one of the things that we didn't really talk about a lot, which I hopefully get into down the road on another hearing, is how important physical education is with the food. One can't go with the other, or it shouldn't be without the other. Our children are not getting the exercise that they need.

So my question to be, especially since I know that we are going to be starting a program at the Westbury schools, and Tony, you have already designed the boxes, and Alice, hopefully did you have any input into the boxes? So I would like to ask all of you on the grab-and-go lunches that are going to be out there, and what makes the decisions on what goes into those boxes? And Alice, I guess you would be the person that would say how does it taste.

So I will start with Mary.

Ms. LAGNADO. The pilot program we started was prepackaged from a vendor that we purchased it, but in looking over the shelf life was not feasible for us to keep—it didn't keep, and the taste was not there. So we have decided that we will do our own. So moving forward, we are going to box our own or bag it, and we will cook the food in our cafeterias and we will design it based on what we have said we want to do: nutritious and healthy food choices.

And we will go back to the committee and to the students and get their feedback. Like any other vendor would, you have to get your customer feedback, and that will determine. But we want to do our own because we have our own food service program and our

own employees, which makes it feasible for us to be able to control what we do.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Which is great. It reminds me—you go to a restaurant. If the food is terrible you don't go back or you send it back—

Ms. LAGNADO. Right—

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. And that is what Alice has done with herself and her friends.

Tony, tell me a little bit more about the packages that came up. We heard about the, you know, the—

Mr. GERACI. We used the National School Lunch guidelines for content, so we followed all of the USDA regs to make sure that we had all of the, you know, appropriate nutrient content when we created the boxes.

In our kitchens that we can cook in we cook and serve hot meals. Many of our schools in Baltimore City don't have kitchens because they have been gutted over the years, and we are in the process of trying to build a central kitchen operation where we bring in, like, all of our local fresh fruits and vegetables.

Baltimore City now only purchases its fruits and vegetables from Maryland farmers. We put out an RFP last year calling for only Maryland-grown products to be purchased by—it doesn't make sense to buy peaches packed in a can of corn syrup that traveled 2,200 miles to get to you for 14 cents a portion when I can buy a Maryland peach for 8 cents, you know?

So what we would ask is that the government give us an opportunity to be better stewards of the money that we get so we can do more local purchasing so we can build better programs.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. That is the question I wanted to ask you: With the regulations that have come here with programs that you are all trying to do into your schools, maybe we should even look at, you know, how do we give more flexibility to all of you so that you can be able to give these lunches that—and breakfasts they need?

Alice, I just want to hear your input as far as your committee of your friends and colleagues in school. How do you come up to the point of where you consider something good to eat?

Ms. SHEEHAN. Many times our school has both the breakfast boxes and the hot lunch, as we do not have a kitchen that works. Most people get the hot lunch or they get both, and sometimes that is what they need to get through till lunch.

The boxes are usually very good. They fill you up and hold you over and keep you calm, I guess, till lunch time comes.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. One of the things that—my time is almost up—that you had brought up, Alice, was also that under-served schools unfortunately have probably the worst menus going.

Ms. SHEEHAN. Yes.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. We have found that to be extremely true. One of the things a lot of people don't know, those that are getting the free breakfasts and lunches—those schools—they don't have students that are actually able to pay. So the schools that have more, maybe, middle-or upper-income families, you know, half the students are helping to support to have breakfasts and lunches to the students. That is unfair.

You know, as far as I am concerned, if we are going to make children healthier we should actually really look a little bit deeper on how we make sure all of our children get the right nutrition.

With that, Mr. Platts?

Mr. PLATTS. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, my thanks to each of you for your testimony, and great cross-section of witnesses.

Ms. Yargar-Reed, I wanted to start with you. In your testimony you talked about the various different programs, and one that caught my attention was the family fitness program. As one who very much believes in—for long-term success and permanent success it really needs to be a family buy-in and not just what the child eats at school, but then how that translates to at home.

I am drinking my water today because 5 years ago there would have been a Mountain Dew sitting here, and sitting at the dinner table my then 5-year-old—I drank about a case of soda a week, and I commute from my district and use that as my excuse to have the caffeine—and sitting at the dinner table one night, my 5-year-old saw my glass of soda, and they get sweets but to this day they don't get soda, at now 10 and 13, and my 5-year-old said, "Well, Daddy, if it is so bad for me why do you drink so much of it?" Needless to say, I don't drink soda anymore.

And so that buy-in is so important and it sounds like that is part of your program is that family engagement, and that being one example. So could you expand on how that works and the success, you know, how it is going?

Ms. YARGAR-REED. Certainly. The activities that we do in school are just for the students, and hopefully I would like them to carry it over to their home life, but I don't know that to be truly happening. But if I actually invite the families to come in and do activities along with their children—a physical activity—then I know by the number of people that are coming and actually coming back and getting a higher attendance at my monthly events, then I know that more people are buying into it and then actually, hopefully, making the healthier choices at home.

So it is an event that takes place once a month and I encourage any of the students that are in the school to come along with their parents. And it is an hour program, and within the hour we do some type of physical activity.

I have a theme for each different evening program. For example, when the weather is warmer we are outside. We did disc golf, and we have also done basketball activities. I set up different stations around in the gymnasium and they rotate amongst the various stations.

We have done volleyball activities, volleyball games. We do just simple movement and tag games. The school that I teach at is a kindergarten through third grade building, so any of the students are encouraged to come, and a lot of times they have older siblings that might be in another elementary in our district, which is a four through six building, so it is neat to see the older siblings actually coming along with the younger siblings and the parents to the evening activities.

The number of people that normally come out on a monthly basis are somewhere between 30 to 60, so I feel that—and it seems like it is growing. So—

Mr. PLATTS. I guess the engagement with the family in addition to the fitness night, in the sense of the meals themselves, is there parent participation in the wellness—in the committee and kind of what you do as far as your policies?

Ms. YARGAR-REED. Yes, there are. Actually, on the committee we do have parents, as many as can come. Because our meetings are during the school day, so some of them might be a working parent but they are always free to send e-mails of any comments, concerns, any feedback that they would like to be brought up to the committee. But we do have parent involvement on our advisory board for that, yes.

Mr. PLATTS. Great. Thank you.

Mr. De Burgh, one of the things that caught my attention with your testimony was the breadth of the type of schools—I think you said 37,000, maybe, and then 21. How does it work with especially the small schools—my district is mainly suburban and rural—in your smaller districts and how they participate? And I guess if you can walk me through how a school participates through the co-op and how that would be different than if they were in a more traditional sense purchasing their food service?

Mr. DE BURGH. Every school district, regardless of size, they get about 20 percent of their food money from the commodity program, but they buy the other 80 percent from somebody. So the key is, how can I get the somebody to deliver the 20 percent, because it is extra money to that person, and it makes it seamless to the school district.

We do all of the contractual obligations for meeting all the federal and state law on purchasing. Because we are so big the manufacturer says, “I don’t need an estimate of 20,000 cases because I know you are already going to buy 200,000 cases.” So a small school district gets to piggyback on the fact that there is a—you know, we are three times the size of L.A. Unified, and everybody says, “Well, L.A. Unified,” you know, it is a question of volume making the small school district functional and then having that function follow the commercial outline so that it is seamless.

Whoever they get their normal food from, the commodity food not only comes from them but comes from the same format. You don’t have a different chicken nugget; you don’t have a different sliced apple. It is the same stuff.

Mr. PLATTS. How big a region—geographic region—are your schools?

Mr. DE BURGH. All the state of California, all the state of Michigan, all the state of Ohio.

Mr. PLATTS. Okay. So it is not just the West? You are great—

Mr. DE BURGH. And one of the things Alice said was more than one choice. That is the key to our program.

A school district that doesn’t offer choice, that is the only place the child ever goes, they don’t get a choice. You can’t get a Happy Meal unless you answer seven questions. You can’t, okay?

So there are some kids that don’t like pepperoni pizza. You have got to offer a choice so that there is a meal that every child wants

to eat. And I am serious, the kids should ask to eat at school when they are asked where they want to go.

Mr. PLATTS. Yes. Well, and your comment about children, if you give them an apple, how they respond versus sliced apple. Having participated in the Great Apple Crunch Program in my district where I go in and serve in the cafeteria and see the packaged, sliced apples being devoured, but if you sat the apple out there whole not nearly as many take it.

Mr. DE BURGH. Using the commodity program, we delivered sliced apples at a cheaper price than the district could buy whole apples. That is how good it is.

Mr. PLATTS. Yes. Great. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you.

Ms. Chu?

Ms. CHU. Mr. Sharp, I was so happy to hear of the success of California's direct certification program, this 37 percent increase in student enrollment in the school lunch program based on having an automatic entry into the school lunch program based on the food stamp SNAP and TANF records.

Since California has already gone through this direct certification process, can you tell us more about how long the process took, how much did it cost, how much money a school district and the State Education Department would need to implement these practices? Or did it save money? Did it save administrative costs?

You also said that California made improvements over time, and I know this has been a 4-year process thus far, so can you expand on all that?

Mr. SHARP. Thanks, Congresswoman Chu, for the question. I will try and be brief and succinct and can provide further information in writing in follow-up.

After Congress passed the law establishing an expectation for increased direct certification in 2004 we offered a state law in 2005—or sponsored a state law—to require the state to develop the database which was built with about \$200,000 in federal funds that were used to create a match, a computer patch, in effect, in between the food stamp database and the Department of Education database. It costs very little to operation on an ongoing basis because technology is so sophisticated today.

The savings and the benefits are really along this side of the table. At school sites where there is not an obligation anymore to process those applications, to handle the paper tickets, and to do all the administrative work, that money can be plowed into better nutrition.

So the up front costs were very minimal, paid for by a small federal grant which, I should point out, you all have expanded in the Conference Agreement of this year's USDA budget for 2010, you have proposed to put in \$22 million in grants to other states to make these systems the minimum so that these innovations you are hearing today become the national model.

Ms. CHU. And then you also said that California's performance improved over time?

Mr. SHARP. The accuracy of this process depends on a number of variables. There are Jose Louis Fernandez Martinez, Jose Louis

Fernandez Rivera. There are lots of variations on the names, and the ability of the software to more precisely put that together and get the right student certified for free meals has been an ongoing process and we expect improvements.

But the big leap forward will occur when you all permit California and the rest of the nation to use the data that is in the Medicaid database, where, I proposed earlier, there are another 1.3 million California students' names ready to be put into free school meals without the red tape.

Ms. CHU. In fact, I wanted to ask about that. Currently, federal law does not allow us to use Medicaid and S-CHIP data so it would require a change in the law, of course. But would we be able to get these data systems to work well together? And also, about the databases that are now being developed for No Child Left Behind, would that be a possibility?

Mr. SHARP. Yes. In California the food stamp and Medicaid databases are housed within the same computer mainframe system, and so the matching process will be reasonably painless. I can't speak for the other jurisdictions and their databases, but by and large that is a trend in social services, is integrating the database functions to save money in a time of fiscal crisis. So the intermediate step to do that involves a change in federal law more than it involves any other change at a state or federal level, in terms of the technology.

But regarding, you know, the outcome of this and what is needed to make it happen, you do need to direct USDA to work with the Department of Education at a federal level to figure out if some of this stuff could occur nationally, at a simple, automatic level, and if the right technical assistance could be provided to the state so they could learn from the experience of California and other innovators in this area. Within the existing system, there is a wide range of success rates. Some states are below 60 percent, some states are at 100. And so you all ought to take those innovations and establish them as the minimum for—

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you, Ms. Chu.

We have been notified that there is going to be a vote coming up and there will be five votes, which means that we will probably be down there for a good hour. So what I am going to do is, instead of having 5 minutes there will be 3 minutes so hopefully the rest of our colleagues can get a chance to ask a question.

We don't like to hang you all up here for an hour while we are down there voting.

So, Mr. Thompson?

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

And as a former school board member, I appreciate the innovations of the programs I am hearing about, and frankly, the importance of nutrition, the lessons of that.

And first question, Ms. Lagnado, the—congratulations on your program and the nutrition that you are delivering. And I wanted to kind of take it that next step, taking it home. Very impressed with the concept that you can work this out for the parents, that is just so important. And I think that is the end game, where for the future, that we really need to emphasize.

So I was curious—any reflection—does your learning curriculum at any point within the school district address responsible parenting and preparing students for future roles as parents, emphasizing the—you know, assuring that, you know, parents are prepared—those future parents are prepared in terms of providing—meeting the nutritional needs of their children, then reinforcing the importance of breakfast, that type of thing?

Ms. LAGNADO. Well, at the lower grades what we hope is that educating them on healthy choices will follow through when they become parents. We know, because of the population we serve, that we only control the school day. What happens away from home is another story.

So our hope is that as we introduce certain vegetables and fruits and broccolis, when they go with their parents either to the bodegas or the supermarkets, they will ask their parents to buy those vegetables. We have workshops not only—we have multiple workshops for our parents. We have them in multi-language translators, and during the school day with our physical education department and our nurses we have immense curriculum education on healthy eating and what it means to have good meals and good choices.

So on both levels not only are we educating the child, but we also focus, through our PTAs and through our parent workshops and staff development, we educate—we concentrate on educating the parents as well to what is good eating and what they should be looking for as far as healthy choices.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you.

Mr. Geraci—

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. You know, I am sorry. That was actually 3 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON. Okay. I am just watching the lights.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. We can't—the timers we have only have 5; you can't bring it down to 3. So we are watching it.

Mr. Tonko?

Mr. TONKO. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The panelists are great to be here and offer all this information. And Alice, thank you for providing a student's perspective.

Let me ask this question: Other than a richer reimbursement for the food supplies that are necessary for the program, if there were grant concepts developed, what would be the most creative use of those grant dollars? What is not being done or what is being done now that could be done better to achieve the kind of results that you would like? If you had those added dollars, what would you do?

Mr. GERACI. If we had access to those grant dollars we would re-invest in our infrastructure so that we could start cooking our meals again, you know, on site. As an example, in Maryland, look, there are more chickens than people in that state. But, like my colleague said, I am buying chickens from Arkansas.

So to me it makes sense to build a central kitchen operation in the city that I live that then could provide additional jobs, green jobs, vocational training in the culinary arts to prepare the food to feed our kids.

Mr. TONKO. Anthony, does that exist—is that a need that exists primarily for urban cores, do you think, or is that across the—

Mr. GERACI. No, across the country, I think. You know, any time that you have, like, a strong infrastructure in place you lower your costs. I mean, if I am paying a processor, you know, \$2 million or \$3 million a year out of my budget to turn chicken into nuggets when I could turn chicken into roasted chicken in pesto—makes a little more sense, you know?

Mr. TONKO. Anyone else, in that regard?

Mr. SHARP. Well, just regarding the facilities gap, it is estimated that in Los Angeles alone there is \$600 million of unfunded facilities needs—everything from hand-washing sinks to actual chairs so that all 3,000 students at an overcrowded high school can eat. The backlog is tremendous. In the Conference Agreement for USDA's 2010 budget you all have made a small down payment towards that unfunded problem.

Mr. TONKO. Anyone else? Okay—

Mr. DE BURGH. You need not only to provide chicken in pesto sauce, but you also need to provide the chicken nuggets. You need to provide what the child wants and make it healthy. Hide the non-fried chicken nugget in whole wheat batter. Pavel has got a pizza that is 30 percent calories from fat and less than 10 percent calories from saturated fat, whole wheat bread; people eat it.

So the key to me is, children are sophisticated, and provide healthy meals that are also attractive. If you just provide healthy meals that aren't attractive, as you said, they are just going to wind up in the trash can.

Mr. TONKO. Okay.

Then, if I have a little time left—I don't know if I do—

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Fourteen seconds. [Laughter.]

Mr. TONKO. It was nice hearing from all of you.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. I just want to say at this particular point that in the appropriations there will be \$25 million to help purchase equipment to store, prepare, and serve healthy food, so that should help out a little bit.

Mr. Roe?

Mr. ROE. Thanks very much.

Very quickly, and Ms. Reed, our data reflected yours, and I am from a rural area in Tennessee, on the children who 49 percent were at risk for obesity or obese, 1 percent underweight, and it was almost identical to what your data was. And we started about 5 or 6 years ago an Up and At 'Em program with nutrition and exercise, and without the exercise you are not going to make it. And you have to have both.

We have a Turkey Trot every Thanksgiving. I thought about 100 people would show up; 1,200 showed up the first year, 2,000 the next year. For the school that shows up with the most kids they get \$1,000 to put into their school.

So we have done some innovative things there, and just to give you an idea, of 150-calorie cola that you drink, so that Congressman Platts was talking about, if you do exactly the same activity in 1 year you will gain about 12 pounds just with that 150 extra calories a day.

And also to tell you how important it is to teach these young people how to be healthy to begin with. Korean War veterans were autopsied, and these were young men that were killed during the

Korean War, and they already had a significant amount of coronary artery disease. So you need to start that at a very young age to prevent these kinds of problems happening.

And just a statement, Alice, I am a doctor, and we would have these drug detail guys come by and bring a fiber biscuit. And I would take it home and give it to my beagle dog, and if he wouldn't eat it, I wouldn't prescribe it to my patients. So I understand where you are coming from: If you can't stomach the food you are not going to eat it.

And the sad part is, 6 months ago I had been in Afghanistan, and 16 million people in that country live on \$1 a day. They would love to have what we throw out. So we need not to do that.

I think the other point that I want to commend you all on is purchasing local. I think that is—we are encouraging people around the country to do that. I think that is a tremendous thing to do. And I will stop and let you have any comments. That is just some statements that I had very quickly.

Thank you.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. You left them speechless.

Mr. Polis?

Mr. POLIS. Thank you, Madam Chair.

First, thank you again, all, for your commitment in being here today. My question is for Deborah Yargar-Reed and Mary Lagnado, with regard to wellness policies.

Your districts have developed and implemented very successful wellness policies that have led to significant changes in the school environment by promoting healthier choices, physical activity, and nutrition education.

However, a recent report by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that the quality of such policies—and I have some experience from Colorado where we worked on requiring wellness policies in the districts—but what we found and what this study bore out is that there is really a wide disparity of the quality of the policies. Many are undeveloped and fragmented, others are well-intended on paper but lack adequate implementation and monitoring.

The Robert Wood Johnson report also found that many policies are weak overall. For example, half of them didn't even have goals for nutrition education; 70 percent did not require nutritional information for school meals; three out of four neither restricted the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages nor promoted healthy foods and beverages.

So my question is, can you share with us your experience on these, and how we can help districts strengthen and improve their local wellness policies and ensure their implementation and evaluation are a high priority?

Ms. LAGNADO. Well, I would like to say that the wellness policy is an ongoing entity. We look at it with the nutrition committee on a regular basis to see how it can be improved and whether we are adhering to it, which is very hard to control when sometimes you have fundraisers that include foods that are not permissible, and that was a challenge with the policy in our school district—it was educating everyone in the school community that certain things were not allowed with the policy.

What we did is try to—the first year, the first time that it was enacted, we actually made it as flexible as we could so that we could educate everyone on it and what would be needed. We recently had an audit from the State Comptrollers Office in the state of New York, and they were very pleased with our in-depth policy and what we had done because we have made significant changes.

And one of the most significant changes, I think, that we have made and we are very proud as a result of the policy, is that we have birthday of the month, where our food cafeterias actually cook—make the cupcakes, once a month, for each school to celebrate the birthdays, and they are made with whole wheat flour. What this has done is, on the early grade levels the elementary principals are ecstatically happy because for now, it takes less instructional time to celebrate a birthday that took 2 hours, now it is done in the cafeteria once a month. And also, we are controlling what the child eats.

And this came as a result of the wellness policy. So again, we are very pleased that this came into being, and we are looking at ongoing to refine it.

Mr. POLIS. Thank you.

I yield back.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you.

I am so glad you brought up about the cupcakes, because—no, in some newspapers, you know, they are advertising that schools are now saying to the parents, “You can’t bring in cupcakes or cookies, and whatever.” There is a slight uproar, but it is actually educating their parents.

I want to say, I have a closing statement, but because we have only about 2 minutes to get down to vote, I want to thank everybody. This is very, very informative of all the information that you have given us to hear what is going on, the innovative programs, seeing what we can do to have it a little bit more flexible so you can do the best that you can. And hopefully we are on to a good start on giving good nutrition to all our children in this country.

And I thank all of you.

And Alice, I thank you for coming down here and starting something in your school, because as we said, this is all about the children—totally about the children.

So with that, I will—

Mr. PLATTS. Madam Chair, if I could just add—

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Absolutely.

Mr. PLATTS [continuing]. My words of thanks. We do a lot of hearings. Some are more productive or informative than others, and each of you have been extremely informative and has, I guess I would say, given a lot of food for thought, and, you know, we will take to heart your suggestions and experiences you have.

And Madam Chair, thanks for your holding this very important hearing, because as you said, it is about doing right for our nation’s children. Thank you.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. And I thank my ranking member for working with us.

I want to mention that there has been a great deal of interest in this hearing and we have received many requests to submit written testimony from other organizations, so I will have, from the

New York State Nutrition Consortium, that I would like to submit for the record. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information follows:]

Prepared Statement of the Nutrition Consortium of New York State

The Nutrition Consortium of NYS is a statewide, non-profit, anti-hunger organization dedicated to alleviating hunger in New York State through increasing access to and participation in the federal nutrition assistance programs. The three programs we primarily focus on are the Food Stamp Program (FSP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and School Breakfast Program (SBP). We commend the House Subcommittee for Healthy Families and Communities, under the leadership of Chairwoman Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy, for holding this hearing on innovative strategies to ensure children have access to school meals.

To improve the educational achievement and health of children across NYS and the rest of the country, and to help achieve President Obama's commitment to ending childhood hunger by 2015, it is imperative that the upcoming Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act provide grant funding for high-need schools to implement universal (served to all students at no-charge) breakfast programs that incorporate in-classroom breakfast or other alternative service methods.

Throughout NYS, almost 90% of low-income children who qualify to eat free or reduced-price school meals eat school lunch through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Unfortunately in NYS, participation in the SBP is much lower than in the NSLP. Only 37% of low-income children eating school lunch are also eating school breakfast. In Nassau County, only 29% of low-income children eating school lunch are also eating school breakfast.

Why is this? Research proves that students do not eat school breakfast due to persistent "access barriers" which prevent them from participating. Short breakfast periods, buses that arrive to school late, pressure to get to class on time, lack of awareness, and stigma all discourage children from eating school breakfast. These barriers are all associated with the traditional model of serving breakfast in the cafeteria before the school day begins.

With breakfast in the classroom, and other alternative breakfast service models, schools move breakfast out of the cafeteria and incorporate the meal as part of the school day, making it easily available to all students. However, despite the tremendous success of universal in-classroom breakfast programs, only a small number of schools utilize these methods. Based on 8+ years of working to convince schools to adopt in-classroom and other alternative service methods, the Nutrition Consortium of NYS found that the most effective way to get schools to do so is by offering start-up funding.

Many school food service directors are interested in switching from the traditional cafeteria model to innovative school breakfast service methods, but lack support from school administrators, teachers, and custodial staff to implement this change. The Nutrition Consortium of NYS found that offering a small amount of start-up funding (\$5,000-\$10,000) is sufficient to garner the support of school administrators for implementing a classroom breakfast program, and allows the schools to pay for start-up costs such as equipment and labor.

During the 2003-2004 school year, the Nutrition Consortium of NYS administered the Academics and Breakfast Connection (ABC) Pilot, which provided grant funding for 20 upstate schools to start universal breakfast in the classroom programs. Westbury School District in Congresswoman McCarthy's district in Nassau County, one of the featured speakers at today's hearing, was part of this pilot. Funding for the Academics and Breakfast Connection Pilot was secured by the Nutrition Consortium of NYS from the Indirect Vitamins Purchasers Antitrust Litigation Settlement administered by the New York State Attorney General. Urban, suburban, and rural schools of varying sizes and socio-economic characteristics received grant money to implement breakfast in the classroom. As part of project, schools reported SBP participation rates and various physical, social, and academic indicators before and after the pilot was implemented. The Harvard Medical School analyzed results and the Nutrition Consortium of NYS published these tremendously positive findings in a report entitled, "Academics and Breakfast Connection Pilot".

In all pilot schools, SBP participation more than doubled. Participation from low-income students increased from 34% to 58% (as compared to the school year prior to implementation). There were also notable differences in other indicators: tardiness and absenteeism decreased; disciplinary office referrals decreased; and visits to the school nurse decreased. An overwhelming majority of school principals and

teachers surveyed agreed that classroom breakfast made an important contribution to the educational process.

In addition, school faculty perceptions about breakfast in the classroom changed. Faculty and staff were initially concerned about the time and clean-up involved with classroom breakfast. Before the pilot began, 58% of teachers reported they were hesitant about the program. By the end of the school year, 85% of the teachers surveyed felt that classroom breakfast made a positive impact in the classroom. Similarly, 50% of custodial staff members were initially reluctant to switch to classroom breakfast, but by the end of the school year, 77% supported the program.

Due to the tremendous success of the ABC Pilot, in 2007 the Attorney General used some of its remaining money from the initial settlement to award the Nutrition Consortium of NYS additional funding for universal classroom breakfast start-up grants. The Nutrition Consortium of NYS received more than 100 letters of intent for the start-up grants, which were for amounts of up to \$5,000 per school. More than 30 completed applications were submitted, but due to limited money available, the Nutrition Consortium of NYS awarded funds to nine schools.

At the present time, there is no funding available for schools in NYS to start universal classroom breakfast programs. The Nutrition Consortium of NYS believes that the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act should include funding for this purpose, since there is a documented interest and a record of success. If funding was available for universal classroom breakfast start-up grants, there would be many schools across NYS that would apply and switch to this style of breakfast service. Start-up grants would thereby increase the number of low-income children participating in the SBP, improve educational and health outcomes in school children, and reduce the prevalence of childhood hunger.

The benefits of children receiving morning nutrition through the SBP are well-documented. In November 2008, the Sodexo Foundation summarized recent peer-reviewed and/or scientific literature published in refereed journals about the benefits of school breakfast. The Sodexo report categorized the benefits of the SBP into three major areas: cognitive and academic benefits; health benefits; and behavioral and psychosocial benefits.

According to the report, in terms of cognitive and academic benefits, school breakfast participation resulted in improved concentration, alertness, and energy in children. The SBP was also associated with improved overall academic performance including higher math, reading, and standardized test scores. In regard to health benefits, school breakfast elicited better overall diet and eating habits, improved nutritional status, and reduced illness in children. In addition, children who ate school breakfast displayed improved psychosocial wellbeing, better disciplinary and social behavior, as well as reduced aggression and incidence of school suspension.

School breakfast participation not only promotes positive indicators in child wellbeing and contributes to a more positive school environment, but it also helps parents and adult caregivers. Especially in these economic times, breakfast at school provides parents/adult caregivers an affordable option for feeding their children in the morning. With busy morning schedules, parents/adult caregivers working non-traditional hours, and children not being hungry early in the morning, school breakfast is an opportunity for children to get morning nutrition.

In addition, the SBP has significant financial implications for school districts in NYS and Nassau County. Since a majority of the SBP is federally-funded, each school breakfast served draws down federal funding. Ultimately, the more children who eat breakfast at school, the more federal dollars enter NYS. According to projections from the Nutrition Consortium of NYS, if 60% of NYS' low-income children eating school lunch also ate school breakfast rather than the current 37%, NYS would receive an additional \$53.4 million in federal funding each school year. Further, if 60% of Nassau County's low-income children eating school lunch also ate school breakfast (instead of the current 29%), Nassau County would draw down an additional \$2.2 million in federal funding.

Educational and financial benefits aside, increasing access to the SBP through expanding in-classroom breakfast programs is critical to ending childhood hunger in this country. We heard an incredible example of this from a food service director in upstate New York, who began a classroom breakfast program in the 2007-2008 school year through the start-up grant funding. Like many school districts, there was some initial resistance from teachers in this particular school about switching from cafeteria breakfast to classroom breakfast. One day, this particular food service director received a message from a teacher. The note said, "Thank you for this program. At first, I didn't think it was necessary. I was concerned about the time it would take from teaching. This Monday, I had a student come up to me after breakfast and say, 'I'm so glad I got to eat breakfast today! I didn't have anything to eat all weekend.' I now understand how crucial the classroom breakfast program is to

my students. I never would have realized this student was hungry and not getting fed at home, and I am sure there are so many others out there just like him.”

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act provides tremendous opportunity to strengthen the SBP and ensure children throughout the United States and NYS have access to morning nutrition to grow, learn, and play. In addition to providing funds for schools to implement in-classroom universal breakfast programs, the Nutrition Consortium of NYS also recommends that Reauthorization include the following provisions related to school meals: increase meal reimbursement levels, fund SBP outreach and promotion; eliminate the reduced-price category for school meals; and eliminate the letter method as an acceptable means of direct certification for school meals.

To view the Nutrition Consortium of NYS’ Academics and Breakfast Connection (ABC) Pilot Report, please go to: <http://www.nutritionconsortium.org/childnutrition/documents/abcfinal.pdf>

For the Nutrition Consortium of NYS’ most recent report on the School Breakfast Program in NYS, please go to: <http://www.nutritionconsortium.org/childnutrition/documents/20072008ShinewithSBReport.pdf>

For the Nutrition Consortium of NYS’ new report on Direct Certification for School Meals in NYS, please go to: <http://www.nutritionconsortium.org/childnutrition/documents/DirectCertificationNYS09.pdf>

Chairwoman McCARTHY. We also have several—expecting several other groups submitting testimony.

As previously so ordered, members will have 14 days to submit additional materials for the hearing record. Any member who wishes to submit follow-up questions in writing to the witnesses should coordinate with the majority staff within the requested time.

Without objection, this hearing is adjourned, and thank you very much.

[The statement of Ms. Shea-Porter follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Carol Shea-Porter, a Representative in
Congress From the State of New Hampshire**

Thank you, Chairwoman McCarthy, for holding this hearing, and thank you to all of the witnesses for taking the time to come testify this morning. Our child nutrition programs play an important role in our schools. Without free or reduced meals, some children would go without breakfast or lunch. We all know that it’s just harder to concentrate when you are hungry. This is especially true for children in the classroom.

While these programs have been a huge success, there is much room for improvement. I am pleased that today we have the opportunity to hear about innovative approaches that have been taken across the country to improve both the access and quality of our school nutrition programs. This insight will prove helpful as we begin looking at the upcoming reauthorization.

In particular, these nutrition programs provide a unique opportunity to shape the way our young people make their meal choices. With obesity rates on the rise, we owe it to our children to not only provide them with fresh, healthy meals, but to empower them to make healthy meal choices when the time comes for them to choose or prepare their own meals. To this end, I applaud efforts to provide nutritional education to our students.

I am a proud cosponsor of the Healthy Food Choices for Kids Act, legislation introduced by my friend and colleague, Congressman Braley. This bill would establish a pilot program that would involve posting the nutritional information of the school meals provided, and developing a nutritional awareness program that would correspond with the labeling. Providing nutritional information is essential, but explaining to our school children what this information means is also essential if we are to empower our youth with the tools to apply this information to their own personal meal choices.

I look forward to continuing our discussion of child nutrition programs and the various approaches that can be taken to expand access and quality.

[The statement of Dr. Gene R. Carter follows:]

Prepared Statement of Dr. Gene R. Carter, Executive Director/CEO, ASCD

Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts, and Honorable Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to share ASCD's ideas on innovative approaches for dealing with the issue of child nutrition and wellness. My name is Dr. Gene Carter, and I am Executive Director and CEO of ASCD.

Founded in 1943, ASCD is an educational leadership organization dedicated to advancing best practices and policies for the success of each learner. Our 175,000 members are professional educators from all levels and subject areas—superintendents, supervisors, principals, teachers, professors of education, and school board members. Our nonprofit, nonpartisan membership association provides expert and innovative solutions in professional development, capacity building, and educational leadership essential to the way educators learn, teach, and lead. Because we represent a broad spectrum of educators, we are able to focus on policies and professional practice within the context: “Is it good for the children?”

Educating the Whole Child

Since its inception, ASCD has built on a core set of values and beliefs in support of the whole child. We believe student success is dependent on academic knowledge, physical and emotional health, engagement, and school and community support. We advocate for sound education policies and best practices to ensure that each child is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Specifically, that means:

- Each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle. Schools and communities create an environment that promotes the learning and practice of healthy lifestyles, collaborating to increase access to health care for children and their families.
- Each student learns in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults. Schools and communities consistently assess comprehensive safety issues to foster effective conditions for learning. Each child has the opportunity to access a challenging curriculum.
- Each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community. Students who are engaged and connected to their schools demonstrate increased academic achievement, attendance rates, and participation in activities.
- Each student has access to personalized learning and to qualified, caring adults. Schools and communities connect students with caring adults. These positive relationships reinforce academic achievement and social, civic, ethical, and emotional development.
- Each graduate is prepared for success in college or further study and for employment in a global environment. Students engage in a broad spectrum of activities in and out of the classroom. Districts and communities work together to provide meaningful learning experiences and opportunities to demonstrate achievement.

Data and Research on Child Health and Wellness

There are a number of studies focused on the issues of child health and wellness. “Healthy eating contributes to overall healthy growth and development, including healthy bones, skin, and energy levels; and a lowered risk of dental caries, eating disorders, constipation, malnutrition, and iron deficiency anemia.”—U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2005). *Dietary guidelines for Americans*, 6th Ed. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

- “Research suggests that not having breakfast can affect children’s intellectual performance.”—Pollitt, E., & Matthews, R. (1998.) Breakfast and cognition: an integrative summary. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 67(suppl): 804S-813S.

- “The percentage of young people who eat breakfast decreases with age; while 92% of children ages 6–11 eat breakfast, only 77% of adolescents ages 12–19 eat breakfast.”—National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Adolescent and School Health. (2008). *Nutrition and the health of young people*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/nutrition/facts.htm>

“Hunger and food insufficiency in children are associated with poor behavioral and academic functioning.”—Alaimo, K, Olson, C.M., & Frongillo, E.A. (2001). “Food insufficiency and American school-aged children’s cognitive, academic and psychosocial developments.” *Pediatrics*, 108(1): 44–53.—Kleinman, R. E., et al. (1998). “Hunger in children in the United States: Potential behavioral and emotional correlates.” *Pediatrics*, 101(1998): 1–6.

“From 2002 to 2008, the percentage of schools in which students could not purchase candy or salty snacks increased in 37 of 40 states. Among the 31 states with at least 3 years of weighted data during 2002–2008, a significant linear increase in the percentage of secondary schools in which students could not purchase candy

and salty snacks was detected in all states except Nebraska (Table 1). A significant quadratic trend also was detected in nine of these 31 states. The quadratic trends indicated that, except in Washington, the rate of increase was greatest from 2006 to 2008 and from 2004 to 2008. Among the 34 states with weighted data for both 2006 and 2008, the median percentage of schools in which students could not purchase candy or salty snacks increased from 45.7% in 2006 to 63.5% in 2008 (Table 1).—Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009, October 9). Availability of less nutritious snack foods and beverages in secondary schools—Selected states, 2002—2008. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5839a4.htm>

- “Compared with 2006, in 2008 the percentage of secondary schools in which students could not purchase soda pop was significantly higher in all 34 states, and the percentage of schools in which students could not purchase sports drinks was significantly higher in 23 states (Table 2). * * * The median percentage of schools in which students could not purchase soda pop increased from 37.8% in 2006 to 62.9% in 2008, and the median percentage of schools in which students could not purchase sports drinks increased from 28.4% in 2006 to 43.7% in 2008.”—Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009, October 9). Availability of less nutritious snack foods and beverages in secondary schools—Selected states, 2002—2008. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5839a4.htm>

ASCD's Approach to Child Health and Wellness

ASCD believes that a coordinated, comprehensive approach is the best means by which to achieve positive results for child nutrition and wellness. Schools should be encouraged to use, and incentives should be made available for the use of, approaches that includes the interaction and coordination of staff responsible for health education, health services, and nutrition services, at a minimum. Students and parents need to be involved and community organizations and businesses should also play a role. By using a comprehensive approach, opportunities to address a wider variety of related issues such as nutrition, physical education and activity and social-emotional health are increased. Doing so also decreases the chances of children falling through the cracks or somehow being overlooked for programs and services for which they would otherwise be eligible but of which they or their families may not be aware.

Take, for example, the issue of providing school breakfast or lunch. An administrator in New Mexico tells the story of a high school senior in his very small school. The school changed its practice regarding certifying eligibility for free and reduced-price meals qualification. The student told the administrator that prior to this change, she had often been without food for days. The student was unaware that she might have qualified for free or reduced-price meals, and her parents did not complete the application. Although it is a small school, the administrators had no knowledge of the young woman's dire circumstances. The student now receives two meals a day at school—frequently the only food she eats during the week. As is the case in many other parts of the country, there are no social services programs located nearby nor is there a local grocery store. Providing school meals on a presumption of eligibility reduces the possibility that students will go hungry.

School nutrition is one part—albeit an important one—of educating the whole child. Schools should be places where students can learn about and practice healthy lifestyles. Nutrition education is necessary, but it should be within the context of health education that meets the national health education standards (revised in 2007 by the Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards and available at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/sher/standards/index.htm>). The school environment must be one that supports the practice that is taught. Policies need to be in place that support the ability of students and staff to easily make healthy choices. Foods sold outside of the cafeteria, such as those found in student stores and a la carte lines, and those offered outside of the traditional school day, such as those offered through school fundraisers or made available at sporting and extracurricular events, should be part of this effort to support the practice of good nutrition. These offerings should not include food choices that compete with the cafeteria nor should they be in opposition to the messages that students receive in class. Nutrition messages throughout the school building and grounds (whether conveyed actively or passively) should be consistent and have as their ultimate goal improving the nutrition and wellness of the children and adults in the school and community at large.

ASCD's Healthy School Communities Initiative

Created in 2006, ASCD's Healthy School Communities effort (HSC) is an integral part of ASCD's Whole Child Initiative: a multiyear plan to shift public dialogue

about education from an academic focus to a whole child approach that encompasses all factors required for successful student outcomes. As a part of this mission, the Healthy School Communities effort serves as a community-building resource for schools and communities that work together to create healthy environments that support learning and teaching. It also provides a space for networking and sharing of resources, ideas, and practices that encourage the ongoing promotion of a coordinated approach to school health programming and policy within school communities.

HSC is built upon seven tenets:

- Demonstrate the belief that successful learners are emotionally and physically healthy, knowledgeable, motivated, and engaged;
- Demonstrate best practices in leadership and instruction across the school;
- Create and sustain strong collaborations between the school and community institutions;
- Use evidence-based systems and policies to support the physical and emotional well-being of students and staff;
- Provide an environment in which students can practice what they learn about making healthy decisions and staff can practice and model healthy behaviors;
- Use data to continuously improve; and
- Network with other school communities to share best practices.

Eleven sites were chosen from nearly 300 applicants to participate in a two-year pilot program. Each pilot site received a \$10,000 grant and technical assistance. The goal was to create healthy school environments with each of the pilot schools working closely with their community to face the unique challenges presented by each school setting. The results were as follows:

- Barclay Elementary/Middle School (Baltimore, MD): Developed an on-site dental clinic and a therapeutic truancy program addressing the underlying causes of attendance problems. They also have a strong after-school program, which is credited as one of the reasons for their increases in academic achievement.
- Boston Arts Academy (Boston, MA): Created a strong student support team that focuses on the emotional and cognitive well-being of students. Community partnerships help the school provide a range of programs for the students, and visiting artists act as role models as well as teachers.
- Des Moines Municipal Schools (Des Moines, NM): Provides physical, dental, and mental health care for students and staff, as well as to the surrounding communities. To compensate for the fact that students have limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables, “the fruit wizard” delivers a different fruit or vegetable daily. In 2008, in an effort to “promote physical activity, provide nutritious foods and encourage family involvement in the health and education of their children,” the New Mexico Department of Education began using the Healthy School Communities Healthy School Report Card in 67 schools across the state, including all Santa Fe public schools.
- Hills Elementary School (Hills, IA): Has a large population of students who live in an impoverished trailer court. The school started a community center at the trailer court that offers a monthly dinner program that provides opportunity for parents, teachers, and students to work together on developing study and life skills. Hills also has mental health promotion programs and focuses on reducing barriers to learning, such as truancy.
- T.C. Howe Academy (Indianapolis, IN): Has the Learning Well Clinic, a collaborative with the Community Health Network of Indianapolis. A nurse practitioner oversees the operation of the clinic, which is available to students with parental consent. The school also established a FAST Club (Fitness, Academics, Success Together) as a unique way to encourage healthy habits such as proper exercise and nutrition.
- Orange County School District (Hillsborough, NC): Has been working to systematically implement an evidence-based, coordinated approach to school health. Thirteen school sites have completed the Healthy School Report Card, and the school superintendent meets regularly with a core group of colleagues to determine how best to strengthen health services.
- Pottstown School District (Pottstown, PA): Has a strong relationship with the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation. The district collaborates with community-based organizations that share the common goal of keeping students healthy and promoting effective learning.

ASCD's Recommendations

ASCD submits the following recommendations for your review:

1. The dietary guidelines governing school meals need to be updated to reflect current science and childhood obesity trends.

2. Rules governing school meal programs should be applicable to all foods served on campus throughout the school day.

3. Congress must take steps to increase schools' access to healthy, nutritious foods. In rural and urban centers, food-service staffs are challenged both by cost and access. The kids in these schools often have less general access to fresh fruits and vegetables outside of school. Schools need the ability to access these products in a way that is not cost prohibitive. At one HSC site, the fruit and vegetable program receives support through the school-based health center in recognition of the connection between mental health and healthy eating.

4. The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act should support a holistic approach to addressing the needs of the whole child. We as a nation must begin to focus on ensuring that each child has the necessary means for being healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Economics should not be the key factor in determining whether a child in a low-income area has a healthy, nutritious school breakfast, lunch, or snack. For many of our children, school is their only source of nutritious food. By turning our focus toward ensuring that children have access to healthy foods and by providing support for evidence-based policies and practices that support the physical and mental health of students across the country, we can impact learning and reduce the incidence of undernourished and overweight kids.

Conclusion

ASCD is a resource on issues surrounding child nutrition and wellness as well as overall efforts to support the whole child. We look forward to working with members of Congress on this and other issues with the ultimate goal of doing what's best for children.

[A submission from Ms. Clarke follows:]

Prepared Statement of Lorna Donatone, Market President, Sodexo School Services, Sodexo, Inc.

Chairwoman McCarthy and distinguished committee members my name is Lorna Donatone and I am Market President of Sodexo Schools Services. I am based in our U.S. Headquarters in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to provide input on innovative practices adopted by Sodexo to improve child nutrition. I am pleased to describe for the committee examples of programs that Sodexo has found successful in increasing the consumption of healthy and nutritious meals by students.

Sodexo is the leading provider of integrated food and facility management services in the United States with roughly 120,000 employees in 6,000 locations across the U.S. We employ approximately 180 dietitians and medical center employees at 5 hospitals in Brooklyn's 11th Congressional District who work to provide food services for both children and adults. We also provide wholesome meals that meet or exceed USDA nutrition guidelines to K-12 public and private schools in upstate and western New York. Through our School Services Division, we serve meals to children in over 470 school districts throughout the country, ranging from big city systems like Atlanta to small rural systems. Sodexo is committed to delivering effective programs that help students, teachers, parents and employees understand nutritional concepts and allow them to make informed decisions that support a healthy lifestyle. Experience has shown us that persuading children to eat more nutritiously is an evolving process that requires new and creative methods that make healthy foods more acceptable to children. Permit me to outline several specific parts of the Sodexo approach which we have found to be especially effective.

Access to high quality foods

We have found that many children who qualify for free and reduced price meals fail to avail themselves of such services for a variety of reasons including failure to complete the application, social stigma associated with school meals or, in the case of breakfast, because of extenuating factors that impact the child's ability to be in school in a timely fashion. Sodexo supports school districts by encouraging families to complete and submit the meal benefit application. Completing the application is the first step to ensuring all students have the opportunity to enjoy healthy meals everyday, followed by developing new, creative solutions and opportunities for students to access meals. For example, a General Manager in California ran into some resistance when she planned breakfast service—timing issue around when students arrive and when class needs to begin. Her solution was to institute a second-chance breakfast during morning recess. She serves breakfast from kiosks on the playground (cereal, muffins, yogurt, graham crackers, fresh fruit, juice, milk). The ma-

jority of the students she serves are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals, and often do not have access to food at home in the morning. Her efforts have increased breakfast participation by 70 percent. The principal was pleased and the teachers say students are more attentive and better prepared to learn.

Creating pleasurable food experiences

Our goal is to provide children with healthy foods that they enjoy eating. In order to meet the desires and needs of students, Sodexo has a team that monitors student insights and trends, as well as reviews and evaluates evolving studies on student nutrition. We have discovered that children tend to eat with their eyes first, so the food we serve must be colorful, visually appealing and familiar. Sodexo has been working closely with its vendor-partners to source food that meets high nutritional standards while also being attractive to kids—both in flavor and visual appeal.

For example, in a school district in Hopewell Valley, the block shaped wax-coated milk cartons that traditionally have brought milk to schoolchildren have been replaced with eye-catching, pear-shaped, recyclable plastic bottles that feature tasty low fat milk in regular, low-fat chocolate and strawberry flavors. In addition, the school provides a number of milk-based promotional items such as magnet, buttons, rubber wrist band and the like. In other school settings, milk machines have been moved to high traffic areas and the distinctive “Got Milk” posters are used to attract student attention. In all cases, we are pleased to report that milk consumption has increased and recent studies support the fact that offering a variety of milk choices sustains student consumption of milk. In a recent study, when flavored milks were removed from schools, there was an observed reduction in milk purchase consumption for all grades (K-12). This reduction ranged from 37 percent in high school to 62 percent in the lower elementary school grades. This reinforces the fact that milk needs creative packaging and variety so that students benefit from the additional calcium and vitamin D afforded by milk.

In addition to the examples provided above, we also have increased healthy eating through the utilization of age appropriate educational programs. At the K-12 level, Lift-Off is Sodexo’s school ambassador and this character is presented in a variety of fun and engaging ways to entice students to aim for better nutrition and physical activity. For instance, we partnered with Los Angeles Martha Montoya, the cartoonist behind the nationally-syndicated “Los Kitos” comic strip. The partnership brought popular “Los Kitos” cartoon characters like Pikito, Mima and Solito to elementary school cafeterias across the United States with a monthly comic strip. Sodexo’s nutrition mascot Lift-Off, joined the “Los Kitos” characters in entertaining and educating students through comic strips about topics like the value of a good breakfast and daily exercise. To help celebrate the nationwide program launch, Lift-Off was joined by Montoya and Mima (the mouse) from “Los Kitos” to bring a special health and nutrition message to students at William McKinley Elementary in the Burbank Unified School District. During this visit, Montoya taught students to draw cartoons during a classroom educational session while a registered dietitian also taught students about healthy eating and then lead the class through an engaging activity session.

For middle school, we offer Performance Zone and at the high school level we offer Balance Mind Body and Soul. Both programs highlight nutritional content of meals, offer monthly promotional messages through brochures, posters and signage, and offer vibrant, age-appropriate signage to motivate students to make healthier lifestyle choices. Students have access to a variety of wholesome menu choices with pizza made from whole grains and low-fat cheese, and fresh salads and deli options.

Building coalitions

We have also discovered that it is essential to involve varied members of the educational community is influencing the food choices of children. In many instances, we have formed Nutrition Teams, comprised of parents, teachers, food service directors, dietitians, students, school nurses and physical education teachers to develop healthy meals and to coordinate and integrate educational messages at home, in the classroom and on the playground. Our chefs and registered dietitians have been invited into classrooms to teach nutrition and culinary skills, and have offered after-school programs, such as cooking demonstrations on creating healthier meals at home. Other school communities have begun to build school gardening programs with the assistance of Sodexo managers and chefs. Registered dietitians and school managers work with parents and nursing staff to ensure students with diabetes and food allergies are properly accommodated. And most recently, we have signed a very important agreement with the Alliance for A Healthier Generation to ensure beverages and snacks served to students in all grade levels meet specific nutritional criteria. By serving snacks and beverages with a healthier nutrient profile in age-

appropriate portion sizes we hope to visually educate students, parents and teachers about better food choices.

Madam Chairwoman and members of this distinguished committee, these are brief highlights of the many ways in which we strive to increase student access and interest in school meals, and thus, promote consumption of a healthier diet. Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to share our story.

[Whereupon, at 11:31 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

