



**SCHOOL
NUTRITION
ASSOCIATION**

Making the right food choices, together.

September 29, 2011

The Honorable Susan Collins
U.S. Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Collins:

On behalf of the School Nutrition Association (SNA), I would like to thank you for your continued support for child nutrition programs and school feeding issues. SNA's 53,000 members appreciate having you in our corner; especially as we all anticipate the final regulation addressing the Meal Pattern.

We appreciate your inquiry seeking SNA's input on the proposed meal pattern regulation and more specifically, our comments which were filed on March 29, 2011. SNA has hosted a number of meetings with USDA and industry since the proposal was first published. We have also been following the debate regarding the starchy vegetable/potato provision, an important Maine staple. I have extracted SNA's recommendations below and would emphasize that the Association is still in complete and full support of its filed comments, not only as it relates to the starchy vegetables, but the entire 11 page SNA submission.

SNA Comments:

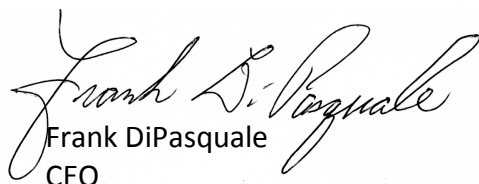
•Starchy Vegetables – SNA recommends that, if the Department does not follow the encouragement standard of the HealthierUS School Challenge, starchy vegetables for K-5 be increased to 2 cups per week and that there be no restrictions on starchy vegetables for grades 6-12. SNA also recommends that the serving sizes of starchy vegetables should not exceed ½ cup and that there should be no second servings of potato products allowed. SNA believes that due to a variety of delivery systems at secondary schools (i.e. scatter systems, ethnic serving lines, etc.) that limiting starchy vegetables will create unappealing and confusing menu options for students. In elementary schools, starchy vegetables are often paired strategically with traditional entrée foods and offered more frequently in the fall and winter when locally grown items are not plentiful. Regulations that are too prescriptive limit menu creativity as many mixed dish entrees and salads contain starchy vegetables. SNA

members have specific concerns that the limitation on starchy vegetables will limit regionally preferred foods, such as corn in Mexican foods, resulting in poor student acceptance of offered meals.
•SNA recommends that no deep-fried heating preparation method be allowed for any vegetable components.

While SNA has expressed concerns about specific provisions of the rule, SNA does support the long overdue effort to upgrade school meal standards. As you know, well over 130,000 comments were filed in response to the proposed rule, including many comments suggesting modifications to the starchy vegetable limitation. Several USDA officials have stated on multiple occasions that these comments are being carefully reviewed, and that changes will be made to the proposed rule before its publication later this year. While we know that these officials cannot say what those changes might be, we are encouraged by their seriousness in reviewing these comments and in their willingness to listen to the concerns expressed by SNA and others since the comment period closed. For these reasons, we support full completion of this regulatory process and look forward to the rule resulting from it.

Thank you again for being in touch. We look forward to working with you as this process moves forward. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me or Cathy Schuchart, SNA's Vice President of Child Nutrition and Policy at cschuchart@schoolnutrition.org

Sincerely,


Frank DiPasquale
CEO

cc: SNA President Helen Phillips
SNA Industry Representative Chris Meinerding
Maine SNA President Catherine Cook
Maine SNA Legislative Chair Betty Hayes