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National PTA Disappointed with Relaxation of Nutrition Standards for School Meals

ALEXANDRIA, Va., (May 4, 2017)—The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced this week that it is relaxing nutrition standards for foods served to students, including requirements for whole grains, milk and sodium levels.

“Schools meals are an important source of the nutrients students need to grow properly and perform well in school. Schools are also where children learn and reinforce health behaviors that they will carry into adulthood,” said Laura Bay, president of National PTA. “National PTA is disappointed that the Administration has relaxed nutrition standards for school meals. Ensuring children have access to nutritious foods in schools is critical to their health and success.”

In 2010, Congress passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, which directed the U.S. Department of Agriculture to improve the nation’s child nutrition programs. Since implementation of the law in 2012, more than 52 million children who attend schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program have benefited from healthier school environments. Research shows that since the passage of the law, nearly 80% of schools offer two or more vegetables at lunch, and students are eating 16% more vegetables with their meals.

“Currently, one in six adolescents is obese, while one in five faces hunger on a daily basis,” added Bay. “Critical progress has been made to provide children with healthier foods in schools. It is important that we build on this progress and do not go backward.”

National PTA and its constituent associations have been working at the federal, state and local levels to strengthen programs that promote healthy school environments and enhance the nutritional health of the nation’s children. In fall 2016, National PTA awarded over \$60,000 in grants to schools and PTAs across the country to help improve the quality of, access to and participation in school meals. The association also released a [School Meals Leader’s Guide](#) to help PTAs, school leaders, food service professionals and families partner on school meal improvements efforts. Additionally, National PTA has been advocating for improved school nutrition standards, guidelines and programs as well as for resources to update the equipment needed to serve healthy school meals.

“PTA leaders, members and families play an important role in helping schools implement improved meal and snack offerings,” said Nathan R. Monell, CAE, National PTA executive director. “At the national, state and local levels, it remains a top priority of PTA to advocate for improved school nutrition standards as well as ensure families and schools collaborate to strengthen programs that make a difference for the health, well-being and long-term success of our nation’s children.”

For more information on National PTA’s efforts to ensure all children have a healthy environment in which to thrive and learn, visit PTA.org/SchoolMeals.

About National PTA

[National PTA®](#) comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of family engagement in schools. PTA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit association that prides itself on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities and a strong advocate for public education. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education, health and welfare of children and youth.