

July 14, 2010

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Improving Nutrition for America's Children (INAC) Act

Dear Chairman Miller:

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) represents the nation's nearly 15,000 local school districts and over 95,000 local school board members through our state school boards associations. As such, we are deeply committed to fostering a healthy and positive learning environment for children to achieve their full potential.

School nutrition programs simply cannot be successful unless the school districts providing them have sufficient resources and local authority to administer them effectively. NSBA acknowledges the efforts made by the Committee to engage education associations in discussions about the bill and changes to some provisions as a result of those discussions.

At the same time, NSBA remains adamant regarding funding, resources and local control for school districts under the INAC. We urge the Committee to shape the program to be revenue neutral to school districts and to enhance local school district authority in marking up the bill.

The current economic downturn has already precipitated a budgetary crisis for schools across the country, resulting in teacher layoffs and other extreme budget-balancing measures. The INAC, in its current form, appears poised to further erode the very systems and students it is intended to help. It is imprudent to approve legislation in this context without recognizing the reality faced by school districts in terms of reduced revenues, the burden of raising local taxes to pay for federal mandates or running the risk of non-compliance.

For example, testimony in the Education and Labor Committee confirmed that the six-cent reimbursement increase for school lunches that comply with revised Institute of Medicine standards is insufficient.¹ Estimates vary regarding the actual compliance cost to schools, but a minimal cost projection is double the proposed reimbursement increase.² The additional unreimbursed cost to the nation's schools for serving 3.2 billion free and reduced price lunches totals hundreds of millions of dollars. The impact on an individual school district can be dramatic. A district serving subsidized

¹ James D. Weill, President, Food Research and Action Center, July 1, 2010.

² Institute of Medicine estimates the cost of compliance as 4%–9% more than current school lunch costs or 11–25 cent increase per lunch.



*Working with and
Through our State
Associations, NSBA
Advocates for Equity
and Excellence in
Public Education
through School
Board Leadership*

Office of Advocacy

- *Earl C. Rickman, III
President*
- *Anne L. Bryant
Executive Director*
- *Michael A. Resnick
Associate
Executive Director*

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman, House Committee on Education and Labor
July 14, 2010
Page 2

meals to 5000 students would need to compensate for a \$54,000 shortfall over the course of an academic year. In many school districts that shortfall is equivalent to the salary of a teacher.

Further, these estimates do not include the cost of improving school breakfasts - which will not receive a reimbursement increase - nor does it take into account the increase in children served as a result of direct certification and other access initiatives in the bill. Compounded with additional standards, reporting, administrative and implementation requirements and other unfunded mandates, the bill exacerbates the current financial dilemma for many school districts.

Therefore, to make the bill financially and operationally supportable at the local level, NSBA urges the Education and Labor Committee to address the needs of local school districts in marking up the INAC Act.

Questions regarding our concerns may be directed to Lucy Gettman, director of federal programs at 703-838-6763; or by e-mail at lgettman@nsba.org.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Resnick
Associate Executive Director

MAR: lg/kc
G:\Adv\HillLetters\House\07.14.10NutritionReauthLtrtoHouseEdCmte

Cc: Members, House Committee on Education and Labor