

June 9, 2019

The Honorable Susan Collins
United States Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Mark DeSaulnier
United States House of Representatives
503 Cannon House Office Building
Washington DC 20514

Dear Senator Collins and Representative DeSaulnier,

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions, we are writing to express our thanks and support for your reintroduction of the bipartisan School Food Modernization Act of 2019 (S.1949/ H.R. 3444).

In 2018, school cafeterias served nearly 5 billion lunches, of which three-quarters were at a free or reduced price.¹ Schools are making terrific progress in providing healthier school foods with more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; less salt and saturated fat; no *trans*-fat; and healthier snacks and beverages. However, many school cafeterias are still using outdated, inefficient equipment which inhibits their ability to meet strong evidence-based school food nutrition standards that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Given that school meals are a critical source of nutrition for children from low-income and food-insecure households, it is crucial to modernize kitchen infrastructure and improve workforce training to improve the quality and efficiency of our school food operations. Investing resources in nutrient-rich meals pays off in the form of improved health and educational outcomes for participating students.

We applaud you for recognizing the federal government's responsibility to support school food operators in serving a healthy and appealing meal to all participating children. The School Food Modernization Act provides crucial loan guarantees and grants to improve our schools' lunch facilities and equip kitchen staff with the necessary training to prepare food with fresh, nutritious ingredients.

As a country, we should be making it easier—not harder—for schools to provide healthy, delicious meals for our children. We thank you for your leadership on behalf of children and families, and we look forward to working with you to help advance this important legislation during the process of Child Nutrition Reauthorization.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley, President

¹ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/child-nutrition-programs/national-school-lunch-program.aspx>