

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 7, 2020

The Honorable George Ervin “Sonny” Perdue III
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write in strong opposition to the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) proposed rule, published on January 23, 2020, titled “Simplifying Meal Service and Monitoring Requirements in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs” (Docket No. FNS-2020-00926). The proposed rule would roll back a decade of improvements to the nutritional quality of school lunches and jeopardize the health of our nation’s youth.

Congress last authorized child nutrition programs with the bipartisan *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* that, included evidence-based standards for the nutritional quality of school meals. They paved the way for students to get more fruits and vegetables in their school meals while also limiting calories, fat, and sodium. These historic standards were based on the simple premise that nutrition is a vital foundation of successful learning.

Since being enacted, study after study has shown the overwhelming success of strong nutrition standards for school meals. Previously, the Department has acknowledged research that found vegetable and fruit consumption at lunch time increased by 16 percent and 23 percent, respectively, after the standards went into effect.¹ And, researchers at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health concluded in 2015 that the standards “make the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act one of the most important national obesity prevention policy achievements in recent decades.”²

Even USDA’s recent analysis and data show that the standards increased the nutritional quality of school lunch and breakfast. In April 2019, USDA quietly released its School Nutrition and Meal Cost study,³ which revealed the mean Healthy Eating Index Score⁴ for lunches increased from 57.9 to 81.5 and for breakfast increased from 49.6 to 71.3, out of a possible 100. Moreover,

¹ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pressrelease/2014/009814>.

² <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/pdf/10.1377/hlthaff.2015.0631>

³ [School Nutrition and Meal Cost study](#)

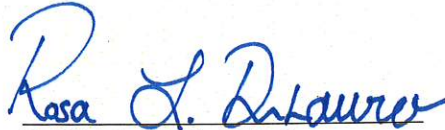
⁴ A measure of meeting the Dietary Guidelines for Americans

according to USDA data, of the schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program, more than 99 percent of them were meeting the new standards.⁵

Thus, we are deeply disappointed that the Trump Administration has continually sought to weaken standards for school meals and jeopardize the health of our children. If this proposed rule were to be finalized, it would threaten the nutritional quality of lunches and breakfasts served by schools. The proposal allows for unhealthier options to be served as snacks, limits the variety of vegetables served at lunch, and reduces the required amount of fruit served with some breakfasts. That is unacceptable.

We urge you to withdraw this proposed rule and maintain the nutrition standards for school meals to ensure the health and well-being of our children.

Sincerely,



ROSA L. DeLAURO
Member of Congress



TIM RYAN
Member of Congress

⁵ https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SFAcert_FY16Q4.pdf

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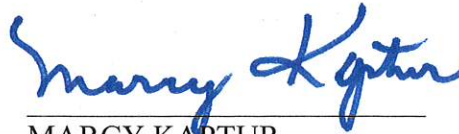
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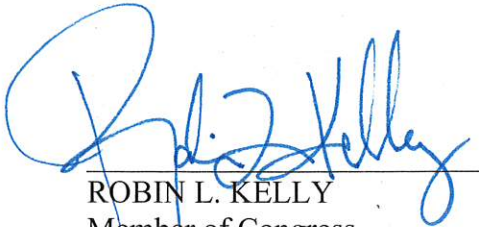
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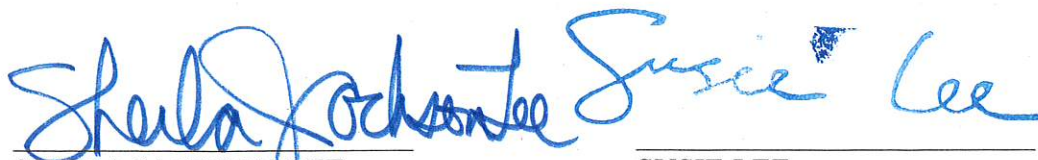
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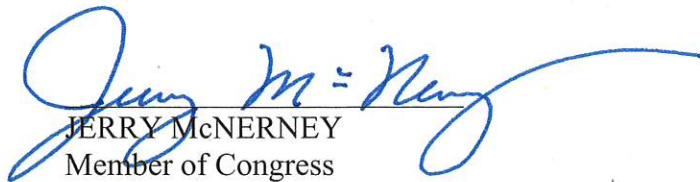


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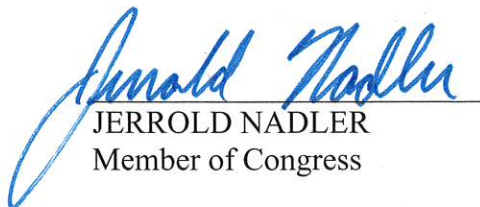
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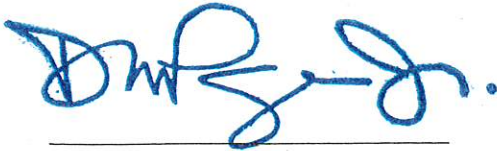
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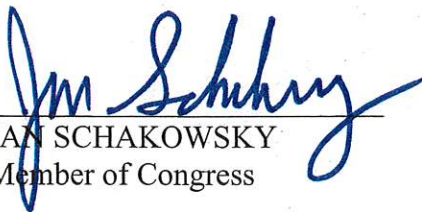
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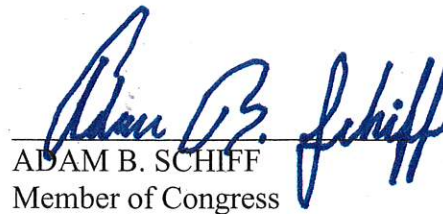
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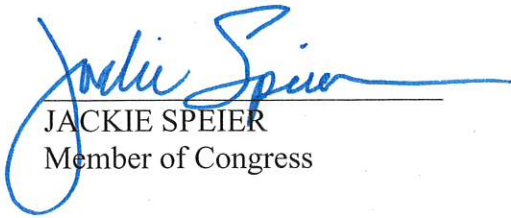
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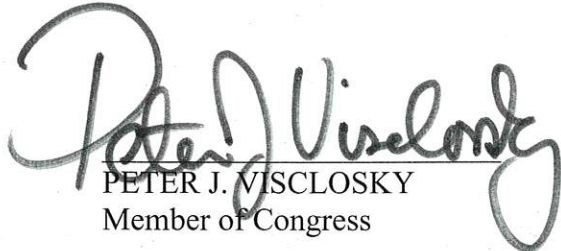

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