

November 2, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug
Administration and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Chairmen Cochran, Frelinghuysen, Hoeven and Aderholt and Ranking Members Leahy, Lowey, Merkley and DeLauro:

On behalf of organizations committed to ensuring students receive fresh, healthy food daily through federal school meal programs – we wish to acknowledge our gratitude for language included in the House of Representatives Fiscal Year 2018 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill that lowers the threshold for USDA School Kitchen Equipment Grant purchases to \$1,000. We encourage the inclusion of the language in any final spending bill.

Since 2009, Congress has made funding available to schools for the purchase of updated school kitchen equipment through the USDA School Kitchen Equipment Grant program, including \$30 million in the Fiscal Year 2018 Senate Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related

Agencies Appropriations bill. This support is vital, as nearly 90% of schools need at least one piece of updated kitchen equipment.

Current regulations (2 CFR Part 200.33) dictate that equipment purchased through federal grant programs have a minimum value of \$5,000. But research indicates that much of the equipment needed most in schools falls well below that threshold. For example, large capacity food processors have an average cost of \$1,941 and mobile milk coolers have an average cost of \$3,110. A recent report from the Pew Charitable Trusts identified slicing fruits and vegetables and serving produce in salad bars as the most effective strategies to increase consumption by students. Yet, salad bars and automated slicers or sectionizers often fall below the \$5,000 threshold.

While access to funding for more costly equipment remains important, lowering the threshold provides flexibility to schools to address the needs most important to their program. We thank you for your continued support of students and school meal programs by funding USDA School Kitchen Equipment Grants at \$30 million and ask that any final spending package make this important fix for schools and follow the lead of the House Agriculture Appropriations bill to lower the limit to \$1,000. We look forward to working with you as this process continues.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND)
American Heart Association (AHA)
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)
Chef Ann Foundation
Food Corps
The Food Trust
National Farm to School Network
National PTA
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium (NREAC)
National School Boards Association (NSBA)
School Nutrition Association (SNA)
United Fresh Produce Association
U.S. Apple Association

CC:

Senate Appropriations Committee Members
House Appropriations Committee Members