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To whom it may concern,

I respectfully submit the following recommendations to improve school meals for our nation's children.

Nutrition-related recommendations:

- **Require a daily plant-based entree as a healthy option.** Legumes and tofu are healthy proteins which would bring the cholesterol and saturated fat content of a meal down and the fiber content up.
- **Require that the legumes count as a protein, rather than a vegetable component.**
- **Include tofu as a meat/meat alternate.** This would allow a wider range of healthy entrees, and any concern about the protein content is unfounded, as protein is not considered to be a "*nutrient of concern*".
- **Remove requirement to offer 1 - 2 meat/meat alternates from breakfast.** This could lead to an actual increase in meat consumption. This is a major concern because cholesterol is only found in animal foods (meat, cheese, eggs, fish/seafood) and they are the primary source of saturated fat in the diet.
- **Ask that 50% of grains be "whole grain" NOT "whole grain rich".** The US Dietary Guidelines, which the school meal programs are supposed to emulate, state that our grain intake should be 50% whole grain. The recommendation to get 50% of our grains as whole grains is not new, and we shouldn't need to wait for 13 years till we get to 50% whole grains from when these recommendations were first made.
- **Eliminate all deep fried and flash fried products.** There is no reason that children need to be eating chicken nuggets, mozzarella sticks, or French fries at school.
- **Eliminate all artificial colors, artificial flavors, preservatives, artificial sweeteners, and corn syrup from school food.** These ingredients are the hallmarks of processed foods. They do nothing to contribute to health, and their main purpose is for corporate profit.
- **Eliminate ALL trans fats.** Eliminate any "partially hydrogenated" oils as ingredients, not just those foods labeled as "0" grams.
- **Offer non-dairy milk at every meal for all students to choose from.** 60% of the world's population is lactose intolerant, especially persons of color. Children end up with belly aches and discomfort and find it hard to study, and don't even know it's caused by a meal component that is required to be offered, with no non-dairy equivalent regularly available.

Additional programmatic recommendations:

- **Increased funding.** Though additional funding beyond the 6 cents per lunch meal may be realized as a result of raising the cost of paid lunches, and from

other changes that may result in less costs to the child nutrition program from the school districts, it's not enough. If we want to feed our children healthfully, we've got to pay for it! An increase of 50 cents for food costs would make a tremendous difference for the quality of food served.

- **Ask that all schools offer meal periods that are between the hours of 11 - 1.** It is simply unacceptable that schools cannot find a way to feed children lunch at a reasonable hour. Lunch periods that start as early as 9 am are not healthy.
- **Ask that all children have at 30 minutes to actually eat their lunch.** Many schools have lunch periods that only allow students about 10 minutes to eat once they get through the lunch line. We can't expect children to eat (or digest) healthfully in 10 minutes!

Sincerely,

<your name here>