

Simsbury Public Schools

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To the Education Committee
Regarding Governors Bill 830
Sect. 19 on pages 25 & 26
School Nutrition Funding

Simsbury Public Schools follows the OPTIONAL Healthy Food Certification plan.

We gladly embrace this opportunity to evolve our school feeding programs into a more nutritious environment in the snack and non lunch areas of purchases. This arena includes such "a la carte" items as chips, cookies, granola bars, single portion ice cream items, pretzels, and beverages such as juices, water and milks. It is the robust sales of these items that enable our feeding programs to be self supporting and NOT a financial drain on the local Board of Education budget.

The advent of the HFC plan excluded many, many snack items immediately from the list of nutritionally acceptable, non meal, food items for sale in our program. Every business person knows that a drastic change in regular inventory or saleable product will likely result in a severe drop in sales. It may be translated into a severe drop in INCOME.

Therefore the incentive of ten cents per meal served (based on the previous year's totals) was an attractive deal!

As the Director of the Nutrition Services program, with a lot of help from my staff I developed projections of income based on the changes in food items for sale to the students and school staff. That meant eliminating many items, reducing the portion size of many items, bringing in reduced fat, reduced sugar items, and offering some items of higher nutritional quality for a higher price (in most cases). Have you ever bought something more nutritious that was cheaper than the high fat, high calorie item? That was a huge part of our financial concern.

We determined a fairly close line between loss of income and the incentive check from the state. These numbers were encouraging and indeed "sealed the deal" to sign up for the Healthy Food Certification program the first year (2007-08).

Unfortunately, the students did not purchase as projected. The non lunch sales declined month after month. Our program has not been able to generate enough revenue to maintain any level of fiscal comfort.

As the economy has plunged, even an affluent district in DRG B, as Simsbury, continues to decline in a la carte sales as well as lunch sales.

Parents are not spending the same amount of money in school feeding programs as they were two years ago. Therefore our programs are forced to look at every opportunity to conserve spending, minimize program costs and generate revenue.

If the HFC funding is reduced to five cents, we will be in severe need of an economic miracle to remain self operating in a responsible fiscal position, that is, in the black not red.

In conclusion, the ten cents per meal is no economic miracle, but it does help us to provide healthier choices and more nutritious options to our growing children. Our programs are the last line of defense against fries at every meal eaten outside the home, soda versus milk and high fat chips, cookies and candy versus fresh fruits and vegetables. These are real choices we teach our kids to make by virtue of having the right choices available to them at school.

This modeling is a way to help kids adopt healthier eating habits throughout life. Please consider the huge impact quality school feeding programs have on our children.

In the presence of increasing childhood obesity and the long term impact of these healthcare expenses PLEASE DON'T BE PENNY WISE AND POUND FOOLISH!

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