

# West Hartford Public Schools



50 South Main Street, West Hartford, CT 06107 Phone: (860) 561-6600 Website: <http://www.whps.org>

*Nutrition Services Department*

*Patricia Molloy, RD, CDN, Food Service Director  
Tel. 860- 561-6610 trish\_molloy@whps.org*

## **HB06824 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE.**

Good evening Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleishmann and members of the Education Appropriations Sub-committee. I am Trish Molloy, Food Service Director for West Hartford Schools. I am a Registered Dietitian and on the Executive Board for the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut.

I am asking you to maintain the current Healthy Food Certification Program for Connecticut schools, with current funding of .10 cents per student meal served for those schools who opt to follow strict nutrition guidelines. The guidelines pertain to all food sold to students during the school day, outside of the school breakfast and lunch meals. Examples are snacks and beverages sold on cafeteria serving lines, in vending machines, in school stores, and for fundraisers.

West Hartford Schools have been following Healthy Food Certification standards since the program began in 2006. At the time, we had fryolators in our 2 high schools and sold French fries each day as an a la carte item. We made \$450.00 per day profit on those sales. We removed the fryolators and the French fries in order to follow the standards, and over time we found that our a la carte revenue went down significantly, but we realized a 15 percent increase in student meals served at the 2 schools, plus we were receiving an additional .10 cents for every student meal served district-wide. It was a win-win! Students were making healthier choices at lunch, and we were experiencing a net increase in revenue.

The additional revenue that our district receives for the Healthy Food Certification program is about \$70,000 per year. With this added revenue, we have gone from offering fresh fruit and fresh vegetables<sup>1</sup> to 2 days a week, to offering them daily. We have upgraded many of our entrée items to higher quality products with less fillers and added ingredients. All of our grain products are whole grain, and we have increased the portions of fruit and vegetables offered at all schools. Healthy Food Certification has made this possible.

Recent studies have shown that school lunches are healthier than lunches brought from home (1, 2). Also, studies have found a link between the consumption of eating well-balanced meals and academic performance (3, 4). School Nutrition professionals work hard to provide and promote the healthy meals that are served each day, and are glad to see that smart snack choices are offered throughout the school building. Fundraising practices have changed dramatically, so students are not eating brownies and candy bars for lunch.

We cannot take a step backward on the progress we have made. The cost of purchasing and producing healthy meals keeps going up. Please support Connecticut students' good health and learning by maintaining the Connecticut Healthy Food Certification Program and its associated funding. Thank you for your consideration.

Patricia A. Molloy, RD, CD-N  
Food Service Director  
West Hartford Schools

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2. Michelle L. Caruso et al, JAMA Pediatrics 2015, Vol 169, No. 1, pages 86-90
3. Katie Adolphus et al, Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 2013, Vol 7, 425
4. R.E. Kleinman et al, Ann Nutr Metab, 2002, Vol 46 (1) Pages 24-30

