



Testimony of Sarah Bourque, before the Education Appropriations Sub- Committee  
March 3, 2015

**S.B. No. 942 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING EDUCATION.**

Good evening Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischman and members of the Appropriations Education Sub-Committee . My name is Sarah Bourque and I am a registered dietitian and President-Elect of the Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. We are a state affiliate of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the largest national professional organization of registered dietitians. Part of our mission is to promote healthy eating for all of Connecticut’s residents, including children. I am here today to speak to adjustments in the appropriations to the State Department of Education budget through the Governor’s Recommendations.

Specifically, I would like to address the proposed elimination of funding for the Healthy Foods Initiative, which provides additional funding to school districts who participate in USDA’s child nutrition programs and meet Connecticut’s rigorous nutrition standards. The program provides an additional \$0.10 per meal served to help offset higher food costs associated with serving healthier meals and snacks. By eliminating the Healthy Foods Initiative, schools will struggle to serve a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains – foods critical to a child’s healthy mental and physical development.

I’d like to paint a more personal picture for the subcommittee members: Take a moment to think of your children. For those of you without children, imagine being a parent. One of your many responsibilities as a parent is to ensure your children eat a balanced, healthy diet so they may grow into healthy, productive adults. For many of us, our idea of “balanced diet” is influenced by the USDA’s Dietary Guidelines. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines provide us with a personal framework of what foods to feed ourselves and our families. They also inform the requirements of USDA child nutrition programs. We all strive to provide the most nutritious meals to our families and understand how critical proper nutrition is for children’s growth and development. Unfortunately for many of us, food costs are a barrier to eating for optimal health.

Now, imagine you are **required** to follow the USDA’s Dietary Guidelines when

feeding your family. We can all relate to the increasing costs associated with eating a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low/non-fat dairy. Research shows, on average, it costs approximately \$12.00 per person per day to consume the 2010 Dietary Guidelines' recommendations. Now, imagine your food budget only allows for \$6.00 per person, per day. What do you do? How do you meet the 2010 Dietary Guidelines? For many of us, it would be a huge challenge. Less variety, fewer fresh fruits and vegetables, and more processed, shelf-stable foods would likely be served.

By eliminating funding for the Healthy Foods Initiative, we are essentially asking our schools to do the same: serve foods that meet the 2010 Dietary Guidelines, but do so on an even more limited food budget. If the additional \$0.10 per meal is eliminated, many schools will have to sacrifice the quality and variety of foods served. We cannot afford to risk compromising the health of the many Connecticut children relying on school meals.

Connecticut has a long been a national leader in supporting child nutrition programs. The Healthy Foods Initiative served as a major impetus for the USDA's Smart Snacks standards, which require all schools participating in USDA child nutrition programs to serve healthier foods outside of school meals. Let's continue to set the bar high for child nutrition program standards nationwide and continue to support healthy, well fed children in Connecticut.

Thank you.