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April 20, 2016

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Education and the Workforce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
Education and the Workforce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Our Mission
Working with and
through our State
Associations, NSBA
Advocates for Equity and
Excellence in Public
Education through
School Board Leadership

**Re: *Support for the Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act
(ICNEA) of 2016***

Office of Advocacy

Miranda Beard
President

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Scott:

Thomas J. Gentzel
Executive Director

The National School Boards Association (NSBA), representing more than 90,000 local school board members across the nation, working with and through our state associations, applauds efforts to reauthorize the expired Child Nutrition Act. School districts and schools are on the front lines serving lunch and/or breakfast to 30 million children. Many districts have struggled to meet the new standards and other requirements since the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act* was enacted in 2010.

Michael C. Zola
Associate Executive Director

The legislation introduced this week makes substantive progress toward incorporating local school district perspectives into administration of child nutrition programs - perspectives that ensure children can access both healthy nutrition and a world class education so vital to student success. NSBA therefore supports the Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act (ICNEA) of 2016 as an important step toward reauthorization, while calling for careful and compassionate consideration of the impact that some provisions of the bill will have on school districts and communities they serve.

NSBA recognizes there are many program improvements in the ICNEA, including relief for whole grain and sodium reduction targets, the elimination of the paid meal price mandate, flexibility with regard to student group fundraisers and a la carte foods, and the much needed increase in reimbursement for School Breakfast.

One of the most important advances are the systemic changes to keep school nutrition programs responsive to local circumstances. The triennial review of standards incorporates meaningful consultation with stakeholders, including school boards, in order to identify and implement needed changes to provide nutritious and appetizing meals to students. The School Nutrition Advisory Council further embeds stakeholder input into implementation of child nutrition programs. Direction to the Secretary to streamline program administration and data collection is long overdue. Finally, the ICNEA ensures fidelity to the law by prohibiting the Secretary from establishing regulations or requirements not explicitly authorized by statute.

This meaningful and ongoing stakeholder involvement is critical in light of current and emerging requirements of the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act* and the ICNEA.

For example, expanded requirements for eligibility verification in the ICNEA will impose significant new operational and financial burdens on local school districts. The Secretary's authority to grant relief based on administrative burden should therefore be informed and guided by local perspectives. In addition, the proposed change in the Universal Meal Service eligibility threshold will have a significant impact on affected districts and communities, and stakeholder engagement is critical to addressing this proposal going forward.

School districts are critical partners in the effort to assure a healthy and positive learning environment for children to achieve their full potential. NSBA supports the Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016 and will work with the 114th Congress as this and other bills are considered, to ensure a reauthorization that supports children's and school district success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Gentzel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

Thomas J. Gentzel
Executive Director