

July 29, 2015

Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

On behalf of our 158,000 members, we respectfully ask your committee to protect and enhance several nutrition education and food assistance programs and activities when reauthorizing the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) (Pub. L. 111–296). This bill provides the statutory authority for most federal child nutrition education and food assistance programs.

Eating patterns and food choices play an important role in maintaining good oral health. From a dental perspective, a steady diet of natural and added sugars, processed starches, and low pH-level acids can damage teeth. Early childhood caries (sometimes referred to as “baby bottle” tooth decay) can also result from improper bottle feeding, breast feeding, and training cup use, along with an unhealthy diet and poor oral hygiene.

The HHFKA supports a number of programs designed to improve the dietary habits of our most vulnerable children. Through these programs, we can help prevent oral disease by raising awareness about how diet and nutrition impact oral health. For that reason, we urge you to prioritize the following when reauthorizing these important programs.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

- Continue requiring schools participating in the NSLP to maintain science-based nutrition standards for foods sold in schools, including those sold outside the school cafeteria (i.e., vending machines, school stores, a la carte, etc.).¹
- Continue requiring schools participating in the NSLP to maintain (and periodically update) local wellness policies that promote healthy eating, and encourage local wellness policy planning committees to include dentists in their activities.²

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

- Continue requiring WIC grantees to spend a certain portion of funds on nutrition education and breastfeeding promotion and support at WIC clinics, along with screening and referrals for dental care.³

Other Provisions

- Extend support for the Team Nutrition program, which develops and provides nutrition education materials for schools to use in classroom activities, school-wide events, community programs, and the media to promote healthy eating to children.
- Extend the nutrition education and obesity prevention grant program for states to promote healthy food choices, with a special emphasis on diets that promote optimal oral health.⁴

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to explore how the ADA can help advance these priorities during your deliberations. If you have any questions or wish to arrange for a meeting, please contact Ms. Jennifer Fisher at 202-789-5160 or fisherj@ada.org.

Sincerely,

/s/

Maxine Feinberg, D.D.S.
President

/s/

Kathleen T. O'Loughlin, D.M.D., M.P.H.
Executive Director

MF:KTO:rjb

¹ Pub. L. 111-296, sec. 208; 42 U.S.C. 1779.

² Pub. L. 111-296, sec. 204; 42 U.S.C. 1758b.

³ Pub. L. 111-296, sec. 231; 42 U.S.C. 1786.

⁴ Pub. L. 111-296, sec. 241; 7 U.S.C. 2036a.