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Fayetteville, GA

June 3, 2014

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 62,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, I write to urge you to maintain the nutritional standards and scientific integrity of the school meals program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or WIC.

As pediatricians, we see firsthand the impact of obesity on the health and well-being of our nation's children. Nearly one in three school-age children and adolescents in the U.S. is overweight or obese. Obese children are at increased risk for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, sleep apnea, asthma, joint problems, fatty liver disease, and social and psychological problems. Maintaining a healthy, age-appropriate diet is one way students can protect themselves against unhealthy weight gain and the serious long-term health effects that come with it. Since children typically consume up to half of their daily calories in school, the nutritional content of school meals plays a key role in promoting child health and healthy eating<sup>1</sup>.

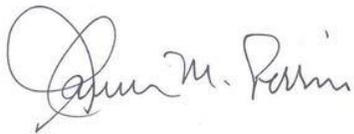
That is why pediatricians feel so strongly about maintaining the nutritional standards of the meals children receive in schools and why pediatricians support full implementation of the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA)*. These standards, which include more whole grains and lower sodium, are just now taking effect and Congress must not roll back the important progress that has been made.

Unfortunately, that is exactly what the Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 House Agriculture Appropriations bill does even though more than ninety percent of schools now meet the updated standards for school lunch. If enacted, the bill would be a major set-back in the fight to stem the tide of childhood obesity. The AAP urges Congress to support what is best for children's health and allow the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to continue working with school districts to fully implement the HHFKA.

The AAP regrets that for the first time in its 40-year history, the House and Senate have included policy riders in the WIC program that undermine the scientific integrity of this vital, supplemental nutrition program. Despite a rigorous scientific review process and the recommendations of nutrition experts at the Institute of Medicine who found that WIC participants already receive adequate white potatoes in their diets, Congress is poised to mandate their inclusion in the WIC program.

The AAP urges you to remain on the side of the sound scientific recommendations and reject any effort to introduce language or policy riders to alter the WIC food packages to the 2015 Agriculture Appropriations Bill. Women, infants and children participating in WIC should benefit from the best nutrition science available regarding the food they receive through the program. Policy riders like those being sought by the potato industry, or any food industry group, seriously jeopardize WIC's 40-year history of effectiveness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James M. Perrin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" being the most prominent.

James M. Perrin, MD, FAAP  
President

JMP/tmh

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<sup>i</sup> Spence, S., Delve, J., Stamp, E., Matthews, J. N. S., White, M., & Adamson, A. J. (2013). The impact of food and nutrient-based standards on primary school children's lunch and total dietary intake: a natural experimental evaluation of government policy in England. *PloS One*, 8(10), e78298. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0078298