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# Memo

**To** Board of Education

**From** Tony Smith, Ph.D., Superintendent  
 Vernon Hal, Deputy Superintendent, Business & Operations *VH*  
 Jennifer Le Barre, Director of Nutrition Services

**Board Meeting Date** 6-27-12

**Subject** Request for Ratification to Support School Food FOCUS Letter Equitable Access to USDA Foods

**Action Requested** Ratification by the Board of Education approving Oakland USD’s support of School Food FOCUS Letter for Equitable Access to USDA Foods.

**Background** Oakland Unified School District Nutrition Services has been a member of School Food FOCUS since 2007. School Food FOCUS is a national collaborative that leverages the knowledge and procurement power of large school districts to make school meals nationwide more healthful, regionally sourced, and sustainably produced.

**Discussion** While Oakland Unified School District does not receive USDA Foods (formerly known as Commodities) it supports the notion that all schools should have equal access to all USDA Foods. The current practice allows States to restrict certain food items including healthier options. Ultimately, changing this practice will benefit Oakland students because increasing access and availability of these products through USDA Foods will increase access commercially. By increasing demand, supply will follow.

**Recommendation** Ratification by the Board of Education approving support of School Food FOCUS Letter for Equitable Access to USDA Foods.

**Fiscal Impact** None

**Sign on Letter in Support of Equitable Access to USDA Foods**  
**Draft 7 – 5/29/12**

School Food FOCUS is a network of large school districts and child nutrition partners working to bring more healthful, regionally sourced and sustainably produced foods to students. We are proud to be working in partnership with many allies in both the public and private sector on these goals, by improving procurement practices and increasing the availability of more healthful foods in our nation's school meals. We are particularly pleased to note that USDA has made significant strides in improving the quality of the very wide range of foods available through the USDA Foods program. Unfortunately, many school districts across the country have access to only a very limited selection of these nutritious foods.

Given the importance of school food to children's health and the critical role USDA Foods play in helping school districts' meet the new nutrition standards and meal pattern requirements, it is imperative that districts nationwide have the ability to make the best possible use of what the USDA Foods program has to offer.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, urge USDA to:

1. Engage state distributing agencies to ensure that school food authorities in all states have more equitable access to the full USDA Foods list, as required in 7 C.F.R. § 250.24 (d) (10), 7 C.F.R. § 250.58(a) and 7 C.F.R. § 250.13 (a)(4).
2. Instruct distributing agencies to establish regular, ongoing communications with recipient agencies (i.e., school districts) and facilitate districts' participation in determining priorities for their states' USDA Foods orders as required by 7 C.F.R. § 250.24 (b), 7 C.F.R. § 250.13 (a)(6), and 7 C.F.R. § 250.13 (e), and 7 C.F.R. § 250.58 (a).
3. Many RAs lack the food storage, preparation and cooking facilities to serve more whole and minimally processed foods and are therefore working hard to further process bulk USDA Foods into more healthful end products. USDA should therefore a) require state agencies to inform RAs of all available options for further processing of USDA Foods b) make all value pass-through methods available to RAs, including net off invoicing as outlined in 7 C.F.R. § 250.24 (a)(8) and (g) and c) articulate the reason(s) the state has chosen to restrict any processing or value pass-through options.

*Sign ons as of 5/21/12*

Advocates for Health in Action  
Baltimore City Department of Planning  
Baltimore City Public Schools  
Boston Public Schools  
Cambridge Public School District  
CAN Do Houston  
Center for Ecoliteracy  
Center for Resilient Cities  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools  
City Harvest (NY)  
Cobb County School District

Common Market Philadelphia  
Dallas Independent School District  
DC Farm to School Network  
DC Public Schools  
Denver Public Schools Food Services Dept.  
Detroit Public Schools  
Eastern Market Corporation  
Ecotrust  
Fair Food  
Food Chain Workers Alliance  
Food Family Farming Foundation

**Certified:**  
*Edgar Rakestraw, Jr.*  
Edgar Rakestraw, Jr., Secretary  
Board of Education  
6/28/12

The Food Trust  
Georgia Organics  
Greenville County Schools  
Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition  
(Omaha, NE)  
Healthy Schools Campaign  
HOPE Collaborative (Oakland, CA)  
Houston Independent School District  
Hunger Task Force  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Jeffco Public Schools (CO)  
Jefferson County (KY) Public Schools Food  
Services Dept.  
Louisville Farm to Table  
Minneapolis Public Schools  
Metro Nashville Public Schools  
National Farm to School Network  
Oakland Food Policy Council  
Oakland Unified School District

Omaha Public Schools  
Pew Health Group  
The School District of Philadelphia  
Prince William Public Schools (VA)  
Real Food Colorado  
Riverside Unified School District  
San Diego Unified School District  
School Food FOCUS  
Slow Food Denver  
Slow Food USA  
Spark Policy Institute  
Urban & Environmental Policy Institute (CA)  
Wellness in the Schools (NY)  
WHYHunger (NY)

DRAFT