

JOINT RELEASE: Stivers and Fudge Introduce Bipartisan School Nutrition Flexibility Act

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Steve Stivers (R - OH) today introduced the School Nutrition Flexibility Act, a bipartisan bill that gives local school administrators more flexibility to better support children and provide nutritious school meals. Stivers introduced the bill with Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge (D-OH).

"We cannot expect to properly educate our children if they are hungry at school," Stivers said. "Our children are our future. As the father of two young children, I believe we must allow those who serve our schools meals the flexibility they need to continue their dedicated work. That is why the School Nutrition Flexibility Act is so important, because it strikes the perfect balance between allowing school meal providers more options, while also preserving our overall goal for better nutrition for our children."

"Meals served in school are an essential building block to our children's overall health and academic success," said Congresswoman Fudge. "Without these meals, millions of students would go hungry. We have listened to school officials and nutrition experts on how current regulations impact their ability to provide quality nutrition and have introduced legislation to address those concerns. I am pleased to work with Congressman Stivers in introducing the School Nutrition Flexibility Act. It gives our schools greater flexibility while preserving the goal of improved nutrition standards."

Endorsed by the School Nutrition Association, the School Nutrition Flexibility Act works to assist the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in its efforts to develop school nutritional standards by permanently removing a harmful protein and grain limit that the USDA has temporarily waived for two years.

The School Nutrition Flexibility Act also allows local school food authorities and local school boards to set the prices of school meals where the local programs are being well-managed and operating in the black.

Last year, the USDA issued a final rule for the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, which placed new restrictions on school meals, in an attempt to further the goal of healthier school meals. Included in the USDA's final rule was a strict, unsuitable protein and grain limit that, for example, holds school meals for eighth graders and kindergartners to the same standard.

In the final rule, the federal government also set the price of a school lunch for the first time since 1946, which could misrepresent families and their abilities to afford certain price increases for school lunches. On March 6, 2013, Senators John Hoeven (R-N.D.) and Mark Pryor (D-Ark.) introduced the bipartisan Sensible School Lunch Act (S. 427) in the U.S. Senate.