



## 2021 Position Paper

As of March 8, 2021

### **FSNA Mission**

*To advance child nutrition programs that promote wellness and academic success, while promoting leadership development opportunities to members.*

The school nutrition program in Florida is federally and state funded and consists of the lunch, breakfast and snack programs. Public and non-profit private schools provide great tasting, nutritionally balanced, low cost or free meals to children on school days. School Food Authorities (SFAs) (counties) are reimbursed for meals served based on a formula. SFAs receive about \$3.50 per meal served to cover all food, labor and overhead expenses. Meals must include milk, fruit, vegetable, lean protein and grain. To break even, schools typically rely on additional revenue from a la carte sales and catering. Schools in Florida can also provide meals during the summer, and schools are involved in disaster relief when called upon.

When schools closed/ partially closed in early March, nutrition professionals mobilized immediately. Using waivers they adapted to provide meals in schools, curbside and through other distribution means into the community. Expenses increased: extra packaging, PPE and sanitation supplies, and the price of food increased. However, fewer children were eating breakfast and lunch at school or picking it up curbside because of remote learning, so revenues are down. Schools across Florida are facing significant losses. School Food Service Directors fear they will have to lay off workers, who've been on the front lines since the pandemic began.

H.R. 133 - The Federal stimulus bill: the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021* distributes emergency relief funds to school meal programs. Florida submitted an application to receive funds from the Act. More information is available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/emergency-operating-costs-during-covid-19-implementation-guidance>

### *Title VII Nutrition and Agriculture Relief*

#### *Chapter 3 Child Nutrition and Related Programs*

**SEC. 722. EMERGENCY COSTS FOR CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC - Provides emergency relief to help school meal and child and adult care food programs, which are in dire need of financial assistance, to continue serving children and families. Provides as much funding as necessary to carry out these payments.\*** \*[excerpt from a Summary of H.R. 133 House Appropriations Committee Staff]

### **Current FSNA Initiatives**

- Ensure school food service workers who are designated essential workers in Executive Order 20-91 receive COVID vaccination priority along with other school employees.
- School Breakfast supplement funding is maintained at previous year level.
- Continued state allocation of sufficient matching funds to draw down all applicable Federal funds.

## FSNA Position on Current Bills

FSNA supports – HB 1191 Rep. Tant/ SB 1768 Sen. Rouson: Language in this bill eliminates the reduced-price copayments for school breakfast meals and includes a \$2.7 million appropriation, requires certain schools to implement the special assistance certification and reimbursement alternatives as 206 defined by 7 C.F.R. s. 245.2.

FSNA opposes - HB 517 Rep. Morales/ SB 1720 Sen. Torres, Jr.: An act relating to school meals; amending s. 595.405, F.S.; requiring district school boards that participate in the National School Lunch Program to provide meals to a student regardless of his or her ability to pay, or his or her unpaid meal charges; prohibiting such a meal from being disposed of based on unpaid meal charges; requiring district school boards adopt certain policies regarding unpaid meal charges.

- The bill language is overly prescriptive; policies and procedures regarding school meals should be created and managed at the local level according to: Public Law 111-296, the United States Dept. of Agriculture, and the FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services' policy guidance.
- This is an unallowable expense according to OMB Circular A-87: "*Bad debts, including losses (whether actual or estimated) arising from uncollectable accounts and other claims, related collection costs, and related legal costs, are unallowable.*" Federal school nutrition funds cannot be used to cover this expense so the school's General Revenue fund or some other account would have to absorb this debt.
- The Florida School Nutrition Association proposes that school meals be regarded as an essential component of a child's education, as are books, supplies and lab equipment. Providing a free meal to all students who wish to have it would eliminate stigmatization associated with receiving a free meal and the need for most cashiers and associated administrative expenses related to qualifying students for free meals, recertifying them and debt collection.
- *Unpaid Meal Debt – A Complicated Reality* – A comprehensive report on how school meal debt occurs and accrues prepared by the Florida School Nutrition Association – March 1, 2019

FSNA is monitoring - SB 1764 Sen. Cruz HB 1369 Rep. Driskell: Requires certain food establishments to recycle organic waste. The House version of this bill includes school districts and provides authority to the Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services to waive the requirements if recycling the food waste is more expensive than the current practice.

FSNA is monitoring - SB 538 Sen. Polksy HB 99 Rep. Gottlieb: Requires public schools to purchase or acquire a supply of epinephrine auto-injectors for specific purposes; requires such epinephrine auto-injectors be maintained in specified locations, including cafeterias.