

American Heart Association questions sodium delay in school foods

23 May 2014, by Retha Sherrod

American Heart Association CEO Nancy Brown issued the following comments today on the Senate Agriculture Appropriations bill that would delay the sodium requirement for school foods under the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act:

"Unlike the House version, the Senate appropriations bill does an admirable job of putting kids' health before special interests. It also helps address some of the challenges schools are dealing with as they apply the [nutrition standards](#) for school foods.

However, the association is confused and concerned about the provision included in this legislation that delays the Tier 2 sodium decrease in school foods until "scientific research supports the reduction in children." Perhaps we need to remind the committee members about the 2010 Institute of Medicine report that clearly laid out evidence in support of every nutrition standard required by the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act.

In short, we don't need any more research to tell us that our children must decrease their daily salt intake. The average school lunch provides nearly enough sodium for the entire day. Without this reduction, more of them will develop the [high blood pressure](#) that could lead to heart disease and stroke before they reach adulthood.

We would also like to point out that lower sodium foods are already available. Product lines from several major food companies offer soups, spaghetti sauces, chicken – and even pizza which could help schools meet the Tier 2 [sodium](#) standard, which doesn't go into effect until 2017. Many companies have worked hard to comply with the next set of standards and their efforts should be encouraged – not undermined.

Finally, the USDA has been extremely flexible in assisting schools which have faced difficulties with the other nutrition standards for a variety of issues.

We are certain the agency would be willing to make accommodations for schools on the [sodium reduction](#) if supply becomes a problem for specific institutions.

Therefore, we see no reason for this provision and are concerned that it may dissuade companies from taking steps to reformulate their products to make them healthier for kids. We strongly recommend that Congress exclude this provision from the bill and work with the USDA to address these issues as they arise."

Provided by American Heart Association

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