

Dear Friend:

Thank you for contacting me regarding federal child nutrition programs. I welcome your thoughts and comments.

According to a study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 32% of Texas youths were overweight or obese in 2008. I am alarmed by such statistics, as well as by some of the food options available to children in schools. Childhood is a critical phase in the physical and emotional development of our children, and it is an important time to develop a healthy lifestyle. Poor nutrition is a grave health problem that often leads to additional medical conditions, including heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

I supported S. 2507, legislation amending the Child Nutrition and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act. This bill included obesity prevention activities and Team Nutrition Networks, which are programs that promote healthy eating for children. President George W. Bush signed S. 2507 into law on June 30, 2004. Please be assured that I will continue to follow this important children's health issue closely.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I also helped to secure more than \$12.66 billion for Child Nutrition Programs in the FY 2006 Agriculture Appropriations bill. This appropriation provides funding for school-based breakfast, lunch, and milk programs, as well as project development funds for My Pyramid for Kids, which is a program that encourages healthy eating and physical activity among children.

Nutrition programs in school are important first steps to encouraging healthier youths, but the foundation for a healthy lifestyle must be reinforced in the home. In the 2007 Farm Bill, I created an elementary school pilot program that encourages parents to participate in nutrition education with their children. Under this program, schools are able to employ a nutrition coordinator to assist in establishing a comprehensive nutrition and fitness program for both parents and students. This program, which is one of the first of its kind, helps prevent childhood obesity and promotes healthy lifestyles among families.

On April 30, 2009, Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) introduced S. 934, the Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act of 2009. This bill would require that science-based nutrition standards be established by the Secretary of Agriculture for foods served in schools, other than under the school lunch or breakfast programs. Foods sold in school lunch and breakfast programs, or in federally reimbursed meal programs, are already required to meet nutritional standards. Yet the Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act would apply new standards to food sold anywhere on school campuses, such as in vending machines or in school stores.

In establishing these nutrition standards, the Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act of 2009 would require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to consider recommendations of authoritative scientific organizations and evidence concerning the relationship between diet and health.

It would also require her to review the standards as soon as practicable after the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans are published. The Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act has been referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, on which I do not serve. Should this bill come for consideration before the full Senate, you may be certain I will keep your thoughts in mind.

I am committed to ensuring healthy nutrition programs for our nation's children, and I appreciate hearing from you. Please do not hesitate to contact me on any issue that is important to you.

Sincerely,
Kay Bailey Hutchison
United States Senator