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October 31, 2012

The Honorable Gene Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

In December 2010, the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act* was signed into law, enacting the most comprehensive changes to the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) in more than 15 years. Among the most significant change was a requirement that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) update nutrition standards for school meal programs. These new requirements, which recently went into effect, impose a calorie minimum and, for the first time, a calorie maximum for school lunches. The rules provide detailed guidance on the types and quantities of foods to be included in meals, such as a daily serving of fruit, a daily serving of vegetables, and weekly requirements as to the types of vegetables, meats, and whole grain-rich foods served to all students.

Since the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, state and local officials, parents, and students have raised concerns about a number of these changes, specifically the adequacy of the calorie maximum, the cost of the new requirements, and increased food waste in school cafeterias. Many schools are concerned the requirements limit their flexibility and make it more difficult to adapt their menus to meet the preferences and needs of their students and school communities.

In addition, new nutritional standards for the school breakfast program and competitive foods will take effect in the coming years, and school officials already are questioning the potential scope and consequences of these added changes.

In light of these concerns, we request GAO prepare a report that addresses the following questions:

1. What challenges have school food service authorities faced in implementing the new school nutrition requirements? In particular, have local authorities had difficulty

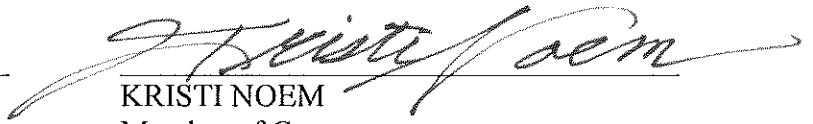
- identifying and purchasing foods that are palatable to students and meet the new standards? Has student participation in school meal programs decreased because of the new school nutrition requirements? Have the school nutrition standards resulted in increased food waste?
2. How have the changes in nutritional standards affected the costs of providing school lunches at the state and local levels? Please examine the potential increase in programmatic, administrative (time, budget, and staffing), and compliance costs.
  3. How has the mandatory price increase in paid meals affected the school lunch program?
  4. What steps has USDA taken to assist school food authorities in implementing the new requirements, and what additional assistance is needed?

We appreciate your assistance in this matter. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Mandy Schaumburg ([mandy.schaumburg@mail.house.gov](mailto:mandy.schaumburg@mail.house.gov)) with the committee at 202-225-6558.

Sincerely,



JOHN KLINE  
Chairman  
Committee on Education and the Workforce



KRISTI NOEM  
Member of Congress



DAVID "PHIL" ROE  
Member of Congress