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THE WHITE HOUSE AND USDA ANNOUNCE SCHOOL WELLNESS STANDARDS

First Lady Michelle Obama and U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announce proposed school wellness standards and roll out of breakfast and lunch programs for schools that serve low income communities

Washington, DC – Today, First Lady Michelle Obama joins U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to announce proposed guidelines for local school wellness policies. The bipartisan Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 mandated that the USDA set guidelines for what needed to be included in local school wellness policies in areas such as setting goals for nutrition education and physical activity, informing parents about content of the policy and implementation, and periodically assessing progress and sharing updates as appropriate. As part of local school wellness policies, the proposed guidelines would ensure that foods and beverages marketed to children in schools are consistent with the recently-released Smart Snacks in School standards. Ensuring that unhealthy food is not marketed to children is one of the First Lady's top priorities; that is why it is so important for schools to reinforce the importance of healthy choices and eliminate marketing of unhealthy products.

"The idea here is simple – our classrooms should be healthy places where kids aren't bombarded with ads for junk food," said First Lady Michelle Obama. "Because when parents are working hard to teach their kids healthy habits at home, their work shouldn't be undone by unhealthy messages at school."

This action comes after the White House Summit on Food Marketing to Children last fall where Mrs. Obama called on the country to ensure children's health was not undermined by marketing of unhealthy food.

"The food marketing and local wellness standards proposed today support better health for our kids and echo the good work already taking place at home and in schools across the country. The new standards ensure that schools remain a safe place where kids can learn and where the school environment promotes healthy choices. USDA is committed to working closely with students, parents, school stakeholders and the food and beverage industries to implement the new guidelines and make the healthy choice, the easy choice for America's young people," Secretary Vilsack said.

To help schools with the implementation of the school wellness policies, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has launched a new "School Nutrition Environment and Wellness Resources" website, which includes sample wellness policy language for school districts and a dedicated page of resources for food marketing practices on the school campus.

These new resources will complement a second announcement which highlights the nationwide expansion of a successful program that was piloted in 11 states with the goal of ensuring children who are in need of nutritious meals are receiving them. Beginning July 1, 2014, more than 22,000 schools across the country – which serve primarily low-income students – will be eligible to serve healthy free lunches and breakfasts to all students. This will help as many as 9 million American children eat healthy meals at school, especially breakfast, which can have profound impacts on educational achievement. Research shows that kids who eat breakfast in the classroom perform over 17% better on math tests and have fewer disciplinary problems.

For more information, go to <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/>

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