



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

Comment from Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams on Proposed Rule

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

FNS-2019-0007

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

March 3, 2020

Counter to its claims, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service's proposed changes to the National School Lunch Program does not prioritize students' health and instead hinders recent years' efforts to improve school meals. We should be strengthening the nutritional standards of school meals and this proposal would move us in precisely the opposite direction. The new rules boast more "flexibility" for students, when the reality is that they prioritize the profits of certain food corporations and industries over student health.

Previous entrée-only options could now be purchased as à la carte items every day, giving students unprecedented access to pizza, burgers, fries, and other foods high in cholesterol, saturated fat, and sodium. The changes to the vegetable sub-groups allow for healthful vegetables to be replaced with nutritionally inferior options such as white potatoes. Guidelines for school meals should instead aim for an increased quantity of, and access to, various fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, and healthy plant-based proteins. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, a diet rich in these plant-based foods is effective in preventing and reversing health conditions like Type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, and heart disease.

I speak against this proposal drawing not only from my personal health experience, but also with the backing of a substantial body of published research from medical professionals. The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies processed meats as a group one carcinogen, and the American Institute for Cancer Research links them to diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. Fast foods like pizza and fries are also heavily discouraged by doctors when trying to prevent these chronic health conditions. The USDA's new rules threaten to make children more susceptible to the very diseases from which they need to be protected. The science on nutrition is clear, but this proposal disregards it.

With the knowledge of the harmful nature of these foods and as the President of a borough that's successfully transforming community members' health through nutrition, I am compelled to speak against the USDA's proposed changes. If passed, this proposal would work against the nutritional changes implemented in Brooklyn's public schools - changes that are already benefitting our children's health. I want for every student in the U.S. to experience what is increasingly possible in my community: the provision of nutritious foods in schools.

The USDA's proposed guidelines not only create concern for student health, but also for the environment. The science is clearly evident and we know that in our ongoing attempt to combat climate change, we should be reducing our consumption of meat and dairy. Production of these foods contributes greatly to greenhouse gas emissions and requires immense amounts of land and water. I urge the USDA to reconsider its proposals, as they would be damaging to our children's health and to the planet they are set to inherit.