



National Food Service Management Institute
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STATEMENT
OF DR. KATHRYN WILSON, SNS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY
UNITED STATES SENATE
JULY 23, 2014

Chairwoman Stabenow, Senator Cochran, Members of the Committee, I am Dr. Katie Wilson, SNS, Executive Director of the National Food Service Management Institute, at the University of Mississippi located in Oxford, Mississippi. As the only national institute designated solely for the purpose of providing training, technical assistance, and applied research in the field of child nutrition, I appreciate the opportunity to share our outreach with you.

Chairwoman Stabenow, we are meeting here at a time of unprecedented coverage of the school meals program. School meal programs are not only a key part of the vital health safety net for our nation's children, and as a past school nutrition director in Wisconsin for 23 years, I believe they are the best safety net for our children. When a child walks through those cafeteria doors, the benefit is in the form of food and the child is assured access to that food. Due to the scope of that responsibility, school meal programs should also serve as a learning tool to educate children what a healthy meal looks like. We operate in the education arena, so school meals must be part of that education process.

As a country we have a serious problem with obesity in all segments of the population. It is simply overwhelming to think about the health outcomes of the future. Yet, at the same time, each of us in this hearing room is struggling to balance our idea of what a school meal should consist of and under what guidance school meals should operate. In an ongoing school meals learning exchange with the United Kingdom, I have come to learn that the nutrition



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standards instituted throughout the United Kingdom years ago are still actively progressing the health and well-being of students. They will tell you it wasn't easy and it took time for students to accept them, but it was in the best interest for national wellness. Scotland for example, has begun to see a decrease in dental carries and in childhood obesity, along with other positive outcomes. Lindsay Graham, RGN School Food and Health Advisor from the United Kingdom, is here in the audience today as a Churchill Fellow from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. She can lend more detail after the hearing if there is interest. The strong federal support, for these programs, in the United States is of interest to our colleagues in the United Kingdom.

One of the areas of interest to many child nutrition professionals around the world are the numerous resources available from the National Food Service Management Institute, also known as "The Institute". These resources are all available free of charge to assist everyone throughout the United States and its territories, involved in providing meals to children using the federal school meals programs, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. The NFSMI is the only federally funded national center dedicated to assisting child nutrition professionals in improving the quality and operation of child nutrition programs. Authorized by Congress under Section 21 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, it is funded by a grant and cooperative agreements through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services and the Food Safety Division. The Institute also supports the administration of agreements and special request contracts with state agencies and outside foundations they may be working with.

Training and assistance is available in a variety of formats. We have 20 training topics from hands on culinary training, financial management, inventory control, and meal pattern training available in a face to face format. With approximately 200 plus trained trainers organized as regional training teams in each of the USDA regions we provided face to face training for 7,554 child nutrition professionals throughout the United States, the Virgin Islands, and Guam during the 2012-2013 reporting period. We are on track to far exceed this number in



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the 2013-2014 report being prepared at this time. One specific example of this included *Healthy Cuisine Kids Culinary Classes* (a two day training taught by a chef and a registered dietitian) offered whenever requested by a state school nutrition association, a state agency or a gathering of districts. This topic was also one of the topics where we had a request to saturate the state to train trainers. In Mississippi, the State Agency organized 8 Healthy Cuisine for Kids classes with 240 total participants throughout the state in a two month period, funded by the Bower Foundation. The same topic was covered in 10 Healthy Cuisine for Kids Culinary Classes throughout the state of California with approximately 350 total participants, funded by the USDA grant administered by the Institute. These hands on classes offer school nutrition professionals the opportunity to learn new culinary skills or refresh the skills they already have. Each participant goes home with a cookbook containing standardized recipes ready to assist them in meeting the new meal pattern regulations. All other face to face topics are available in the same manner. All curriculum for our face to face trainings are available to download for free for districts to use within their own time frame and convenience. The easy to use instructors manual, participant's workbook, and power point are available on our website. Many short training videos are also available for download and use in school and child care kitchens. These are anywhere from 6- 20 minute videos on specific topics such as cooking dried peas and beans and dealing with food allergies in your school nutrition program.

Many of these trainings and others are also available through our online training courses. From how to best use USDA Foods, nutrition 101, food safety, norovirus, and allergy training, over 40 topics of online courses are easy to access from a computer or tablet. Participants can start and stop them at their convenience and a certificate of completion pops up after the participant completes the course and passes a quiz with a 70% learning rate. In the 2012-2013 reporting period, 33,585 participants registered and completed an online course. We again are looking at exceeding this number as we compile our 2013-2014 report. All are available free of charge. A list of face to face trainings and online courses has been attached to my written testimony.



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Individual district technical assistance is also available. If a state agency or regional office requests technical assistance for a specific district, the Institute will hire a consultant based on the area of expertise needed. This consultant will meet with the requesting agency and then go into the district and make an assessment as to how we can best help them come into compliance. We have recently worked in two districts in Kansas on free and reduced form systems and meal pattern compliance and are presently working with the New York City Schools to develop a process to train their own trainers in critical subject areas to ensure compliance. These technical assistance visits have resulted in positive outcomes for the districts. This is also free of charge to the districts involved.

Madam Chairwoman, school meals have become a focus point for many in this country. The National Food Service Management Institute and many other allied organizations provide great resources for school nutrition professionals as they work to ensure high quality, nutritious meals are being served in our school cafeterias. Although it has become more and more challenging to feed a consumer savvy population, it is important to realize what our job is within that school building. A child will learn life- long eating habits during their tenure in school.

In closing, I would like to thank the Senate for its leadership in providing this hearing and your commitment to our children and child nutrition programs. I would be happy to answer any questions for clarification as time allows.

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