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NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COUNTY & CITY
HEALTH OFFICIALS

August 14, 2007

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Senate Agriculture Committee
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Ranking Member, Senate Agriculture Committee
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Senator Chambliss:

On behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials, I urge you to include the following priorities as part of this year's farm bill. Local health department officials feel strongly that this farm bill represents a crucial opportunity to promote access to healthy food choices and thereby address the increasing prevalence of obesity and obesity-related chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

Food Stamp Nutrition Education

Local health departments have developed innovative methods of social marketing to produce behavior modification in areas such as reducing smoking and encouraging physical activity. The Institute of Medicine indicates that diet and physical activity behavior change is more likely to result from the combination of public health approaches and education. Therefore, the Secretary of Agriculture should support and encourage the most effective interventions for nutrition education under the Food Stamp Act of 1977, including public health approaches as well as traditional education, to increase the likelihood that recipients of Food Stamps benefit, and that those who are potentially eligible for such benefits will choose diets and physical activity practices consistent with the Dietary Guidelines.

REQUEST: USDA to allow use of public health approaches in Food Stamp Nutrition Education

Community Food Projects

First authorized in the 1996 Farm Bill, the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program (CFP) has made grants to over 240 innovative community food projects, promoting a wide variety of community-based solutions to local food system and food security problems. Several CFP grants help to ensure that healthy foods are available to residents of low income communities, addressing long-standing health inequities that produce unequal health outcomes based partly on economic factors. Building on this success, we are proposing to significantly expand the size and scope of the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program.

REQUEST: We request that the funding remain mandatory, as it has been for the last 10 years and be increased to \$30 million annually.

Healthy Food Enterprise Development Program

A new program, Healthy Food Enterprise Development program, helps to provide locally grown healthy foods to public institutions and spurs innovation and entrepreneurship in the food supply chain by providing feasibility grants and direct USDA loans and loan guarantees. Gaps in the food supply chain, from lack of access to financing capital, severely limit the development of entrepreneurial businesses needed to link food service companies, retail food stores, and public institutions with local and regional agricultural producers. First introduced in HR 2364, the Healthy Food Enterprise Development program provides up to \$42.5 million in mandatory funds for grants for feasibility studies, direct loans, loan guarantees and technical assistance for minority producers and low-income communities.

REQUEST: Support the authorization of the Healthy Food Enterprise Development program in the 2007 Farm Bill at \$42.5 million.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program

Originally started in the 2002 Farm Bill, the goal of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program (FFVP) is to increase children's consumption of healthy fresh fruits and vegetables. This highly effective program has proven to be a model for increasing children's consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables – decreasing their purchase of soda, chips and candy - and a cornerstone in schools' efforts to create healthier school food environments. The FFVP is one of USDA's strategies for improving children's nutritional status and is also now considered a global strategy for reducing risk of childhood overweight/obesity by the World Health Organization. Currently, 375 schools in 14 states and 3 Indian Tribal Organizations are funded to provide fresh fruit and vegetable snacks for free to school children every day. The 2007 Farm Bill provides an unprecedented opportunity to expand this program nationally to benefit children's health. \$300 million/year in mandatory funding will allow 10% of all schools and school children in the U.S. to participate.

REQUEST: National Expansion of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program with mandatory funding of \$300 million/year to reach at least 100 schools in every state and schools in Indian Tribal Organizations and the District of Columbia.

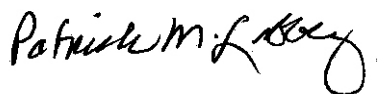
DoD Fresh Program

The DoD Fresh is the primary procurement program that enables schools to serve more fresh fruits and vegetables in school lunches. DoD Fresh is very effective in providing high quality, low-cost fresh fruits and vegetables delivered directly to schools in the amounts they need. The program is currently funded at \$50 million/year using funds available under section 32; increased funding to \$75 million in FY'09 and FY'10, \$100 million for FY'11 and \$125 million in FY'12 would enable more fresh fruits and vegetables to be served in school meals.

REQUEST: Increase funding for the DoD Fresh Program to provide more fresh fruits and vegetables to school lunch. (Target: \$75m in FY'09 and FY'10; \$100m in FY'11; \$125m in FY'12)

Thank you for your attention to these important issues. In closing, NACCHO urges Congress to take the steps listed above to combat the growing epidemic of obesity and chronic disease.

Sincerely,



Patrick M. Libbey
Executive Director