May 3, 2010

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
House Education & Labor Committee
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Kline
Ranking Member
House Education & Labor Committee
1210 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Kline:

As you consider the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act, we urge you to support funding for the Farm to School Program, an authorized program of the Child Nutrition Act of 2004. Specifically, we recommend $50 million in mandatory funding for a farm to school competitive grant program within this important legislation. Representative Rush Holt has recently introduced comprehensive legislation regarding this important program (H.R. 4710).

The school meals program is the frontline for child nutrition with children consuming more than 50 percent of their daily calories in school. With the paradox of a soaring obesity epidemic and increased hunger, we must champion effective and innovative approaches to ensure the health and wellbeing of future generations.

Farm to school programs represent a proven model with programs in 44 states, for successfully connecting local farms to schools to provide highly nutritious foods in our nation's school cafeterias. These programs have demonstrated the ability to cost effectively improve the nutritional quality of school meals, while simultaneously creating a new and important market for our nation's farmers.

While authorizing language was included in the Child Nutrition Act of 2004 to support farm to cafeteria programs, it unfortunately has yet to receive appropriations from Congress. Farm to school programs continue to grow throughout the country but funding challenges remain in many districts and regions. By providing mandatory federal funding, Congress will give communities the essential one-time seed money to develop the necessary infrastructure, training, and relationships to support robust, economically sustainable programs that improve the health of America's school children.

In these challenging economic times, every dollar must be examined for its effectiveness. By investing in farm to school programs, Congress provides an opportunity to feed school children more healthfully by enhancing existing nutrition programs, while at the same time cultivating new markets for farmers and stimulating rural economies.

Therefore, the following organizations urge your support for mandatory funding for Farm to School programs within the Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization.

Best regards,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Dietetic Association
American Farmland Trust
American Public Health Association
Center for Rural Affairs
Chartwells School Dining Services
Community Action Partnership
Community Food Security Coalition
Directors of Health Promotion and Education
End Hunger Network
Farm Aid
Federation of Southern Cooperatives
Food and Water Watch
Healthy Schools Campaign
Heifer International
Liquori and Associates, LLC
National Association of Counties
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farm to School Network
National Farmers Union
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
One Tray Coalition
Partnership for Prevention
Prevention Institute
Rodale Institute
RuralVotes
School Nutrition Association
Share our Strength
Slow Food USA
Society for Public Health Education
Sodexo
United Fresh Produce Association
US Conference of Mayors
Wallace Center at Winrock International
Western Organization of Resource Councils
WhyHunger