

Good Saturday morning to each of you. The January 25, 2020 Federal Advocacy and Public Policy Update can be found at the conclusion of this message. Please let me know if you have any questions about the items included in the update. As always, thank you for all you do on behalf of public education in Virginia.

Have a very good weekend!

Best,

J.T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update

January 25, 2020

Congressional Update

House Subcommittee Plans Focus on Digital Equity

The House Subcommittee on Communications and Technology scheduled a hearing titled “Empowering and Connecting Communities through Digital Equity and Internet Adoption” for January 29 at 10:30 AM. The witness list has not yet been announced.

NSF Director Testifies in Senate about Education and the Future Workforce

The Senate Commerce Committee held a hearing last week to examine how the United States can “maintain its global economic edge in artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, quantum information science, biotechnology, and developing the next generation of wireless networks and infrastructure.” National Science Foundation Director France Córdova testified about NSF’s support for training the next generation workforce saying, “NSF is investing in education research across all levels of learning – from preK-12 through graduate education and beyond – which then informs education and training programs to better develop skill sets in cutting-edge technologies, promote highly collaborative team science, and foster greater diversity in the workforce.” Her full written testimony is [available here](#).

Administration Update

Department of Agriculture Proposes Changes to Nutrition Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture invited public comment on proposed changes to the [National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs](#) (NSLBP). Separately, the department is seeking comments on proposed changes to the [Summer Food Service Program](#) (SFSP).

Highlights of Proposed Changes to the NSLBP (as described by USDA):

- Allow local schools to offer more vegetable varieties, while keeping plenty of veggies in each meal;
- Make it easier for schools to offer school lunch entrees for a la carte purchase, thereby reducing food waste;
- Provide schools options to customize meal patterns to best serve children in different grades or smaller schools who eat together;
- Support a more customized school breakfast environment by letting schools adjust fruit servings and making it simpler to offer meats/meat alternates, ultimately encouraging breakfast options outside the cafeteria so students can start their day with a healthy breakfast; and
- Shift to a performance-focused administrative review process that is less burdensome and time consuming, which would increase collaboration with operators to improve program integrity.

Highlights of Proposed Changes to the SFSP (as described by USDA):

- Providing more flexibilities in choosing meal offerings, meal service times, and allowing children to take certain nonperishable food items offsite;
- Granting tested and proven flexibilities that make it easier for sponsors and sites to participate by reducing paperwork and streamlining the application process for high-performing, experienced operators;
- Balancing program integrity and flexibility with stronger monitoring to help sponsors maximize their resources; and Clarifying performance standards and eligibility requirements for sites.

NSBA plans to closely review the proposed rules and offer feedback to the Department. Public comments in both proceedings must be submitted to the Department of Agriculture no later than March 23, 2020.

Department of Education Civil Rights Office Establishes Non-Discrimination Center

The Department of Education announced that the Office for Civil Rights will launch an Outreach, Prevention, Education and Non-discrimination (OPEN) Center. The center will focus on proactive compliance with federal civil rights laws and provide support to schools, educators, families, and students. The department said, “While OCR typically enforces federal civil rights laws through the traditional complaint-resolution process, OCR will, through the provision of targeted support to recipient institutions and the public, also be able to work more proactively—prior to the filing of complaints—to ensure that schools are aware of their obligations under federal civil rights law. By investing resources in technical assistance and public education, OCR will provide not only much-needed assistance to recipients, but also better support students, families, and stakeholders.”

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