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February 11, 2009

The Honorable Jim Doyle
Room 115 East
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53701

Dear Governor Doyle:

I am writing in my capacity as chair of the Joint Legislative Council's Special Committee on Performance-Based Disease Management for Large Populations. Among other items in its charge, the Special Committee is directed to focus on group settings for children, primarily schools, preschool, and day care settings and the laws, rules, and policies related to nutrition and physical activities in those settings especially in regard to childhood obesity.

The Special Committee would like to express its support for the Department of Public Instruction's 2009-11 budget requests of: (1) \$2,500,000 annually above annual base funding to increase payments to school districts under the state school lunch reimbursement program; and (2) \$1,263,100 in 2009-10 and \$2,176,900 in 2010-11 over annual base funding to increase payments to school districts under the state school breakfast reimbursement program.

As you know, the national school lunch and school breakfast programs provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals and snacks to children every school day. The state is then required to provide a set matching payment under the federal programs, based in part on the state's per capita income in a given year. According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, this amount has equaled approximately .43 per meal for lunches served and .1351 per breakfast served. The department's requested funding would provide an increase of approximately .025 per lunch served and provide sufficient funding for the full statutory reimbursement of .15 per breakfast served. The Special Committee members believe that these reimbursement increases would decrease the amount school districts are transferring from educational funds to school nutrition funds by approximately 50%.

The Special Committee also supports creating a mechanism within the national school lunch program to serve more fruits, vegetables and whole grains to school children, in addition to any other increase in reimbursement rates the state is able to provide to schools. The Special Committee believes that encouraging children to develop healthy eating habits complements existing statewide efforts to improve public health in Wisconsin. Preparing children to value health and nutrition will ensure that Wisconsin continues to be a national leader in public health.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have questions, please contact Rachel Letzing or Mary Matthias at the Legislative Council.

Sincerely,

Senator Julie Lassa
Chair, Special Committee on
Performance-Based Disease Management
Programs for Large Populations

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