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## National PTA Chief Executive Testifies on Child Nutrition at Senate Committee Hearing

*Provides recommendations for Child Nutrition Act reauthorization*  
*Calls for updated national nutrition standards for school foods sold outside the school meals programs*

**WASHINGTON, DC (March 31, 2009)** – Today, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) delivered the voice of millions of parents and child advocates to Capitol Hill and presented six of their recommendations for the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act.

Byron Garrett, Chief Executive Officer of the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), testified before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry at a hearing titled, "Beyond Federal School Meal Programs: Reforming Nutrition for Kids in Schools." The hearing featured a panel of other child health and education organization representatives, as well as representatives from the food and beverage industry.

Before listing the recommendations, Garrett cited several advocacy and legislative efforts that the National PTA has championed since its founding in 1897 and noted the organization's involvement in successfully including language mandating the creation of local school wellness policies in the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004.

"I am aware that not all of the factors relevant to addressing child health fall under the purview of this committee. However, it is critical to approach child nutrition holistically and assess issues in the entire school foods environment," said Garrett.

National PTA's recommendations for the upcoming reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act include:

- Require policies for the provision of recess, physical education, and regulation of food marketing in schools to be included in local wellness policies.
- Require periodic assessments of the development, notification, implementation, and content of local wellness policies.
- Increase reimbursement rates for school meals.

- Increase the promotion of school meals programs and reduce the administrative barriers that limit participation.
- Require the development of best practices for the processing of USDA commodities to more closely align these products with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- Require the USDA to update the national nutrition standards for school foods sold outside of the school meals programs in order to keep pace with emerging scientific evidence.

The testimony focused more on the last recommendation listed. PTA is a strong supporter of the Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act, which requires the USDA to update the nutrition standards for foods sold on school grounds outside of the School Lunch and Breakfast programs. School meals must meet detailed nutrition standards set by Congress and be updated regularly by the USDA in order for a school food service program to receive federal subsidies. The meals are typically balanced and contain recommended amounts of vitamins and minerals.

“In contrast, the nutrition standards for foods sold outside the meal programs have not been updated since 1979,” said Garrett.

These foods include those sold in vending machines, cafeteria a la carte menus, and school stores. The only nutritional criteria for school foods sold outside of meals are that “foods of minimal nutritional value” (FMNV) may not be sold in the food service area during meal times. FMNV are foods that provide less than 5 percent of the Reference Daily Intake for eight specified nutrients per serving. Many low-nutrition foods are not considered FMNV despite their high content of calories, saturated fat, salt, or added sugars, and can be sold anywhere on school campuses at anytime during the school day.

“This outdated practice no longer stands up to the scrutiny of contemporary science, dietary patterns or health standards. The best interests of our children demand that the nutrition standards be modernized,” said Garrett.

“A minimum federal protective nutrition standard for food sold outside of school meals is necessary to protect the integrity of the school lunch program and the health of all children in our nation’s public schools.”

### **About National PTA**

PTA comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools. PTA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that prides itself on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education health, and welfare of children and youth.