



## UNITED STATES CONGRESS

January 26, 2010

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I write to you regarding the U.S. Department of Agriculture's comprehensive review of its food safety programs and policies. As you know, the House Committee on Education and Labor, which I chair, has jurisdiction over federal child nutrition programs, including school meals. As you work to strengthen the food safety system I ask that you fully consider school foodservice and the child nutrition programs in these reviews.

Schools have a strong record in recent years of providing safe meals. In order to continue that record, the federal government must be a constructive partner. Unfortunately, the food safety system is complex and difficult for the public, schools and industry to navigate. I encourage you to consider ways that will reduce this complexity and increase the transparency of the system in a manner that will offer the public assurances they need about the safety of the food they consume at school.

I believe that the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) could offer USDA some critical assistance in its review of the food safety system and we encourage you to consider commissioning them in this effort. The NAS is a well-respected institution that has the capacity to conduct a comprehensive, science-based examination of USDA's food safety programs and policies. Their previous work in the area of school nutrition will complement this effort.

My committee staff and I look forward to working with you and your staff on this important national priority to build a more effective federal food safety system. Should you have any questions, please contact Patrick Findlay, the Committee's Investigative Counsel, at 202-22X-XXXX or Gabrielle Serra of the Committee at 202-22X-XXXX.

Sincerely,

**GEORGE MILLER**  
Chairman

cc: John Kline, Ranking Member