

LARSON KICKS OFF NATIONAL BREAKFAST WEEK WITH STUDENTS AT KENNELLY SCHOOL

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HARTFORD – Students at the Kennelly Elementary School in Hartford shared their cereal and juice this morning with a guest from Washington. United States Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) visited with students at the school to help kick off the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) "National Breakfast Week," which begins today.

According to the Hartford Public Schools Office of Food Service and Nutrition Education, approximately 6,000 students are currently participating in its school breakfast program. At Kennelly, about 200 students a day are served breakfast.

Larson stated, "We cannot expect children to be ready to learn when they don't have the energy to concentrate. These are the critical learning years for our children. As a father of three elementary school-age children, I know first-hand the value of providing children with a nutritional breakfast. I highly commend the Superintendent Amato, Carole Kurtz, and the many others who continue to make school breakfast a priority through Hartford's "Jump Start Your Day with School Breakfast" campaign.

Following up on a similar request he made last year, on Friday (March 3) Larson sent letters to the chairman and ranking member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture asking them to support an additional \$6 million in this year's budget to fund a national elementary school breakfast pilot program through September 2001. The pilot would make nutritious breakfasts available free of charge to all students regardless of family income.

The goal of the pilot program, which will operate in only six school districts nationwide, is to assess the relationship between school breakfast and learning and, specifically, to evaluate whether providing breakfast to all children in elementary school, as part of the school day, increases academic achievement. USDA will conclude its selection of school districts for the pilot program by April 1, 2000. Hartford did not apply for the pilot program since it is one of only a few school districts in the state that already offers free breakfast to every student regardless of income.

Larson also requested that the chairman and ranking member fully fund the President's \$10.3 billion request for Child Nutrition Programs, which include the School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

Carole Kurtz, R.D., Director of Food Services and Nutritional Education for the Hartford Public Schools, was also part of Larson's breakfast kick-off at Kennelly school. She stated, "It is important that children have every advantage they can when they enter the classroom. We are providing healthful meals at school to make sure hunger is not an obstacle for them."

A Harvard University/Massachusetts General Hospital study of children in Philadelphia and Baltimore schools found that students who usually eat school breakfast had improved math grades, reduced hyperactivity, decreased absence and tardy rates, and improved psycho-social behaviors compared with children who rarely ate school breakfast.

The School Breakfast Program, authorized by the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, started as a pilot program to provide funding for school breakfasts in poor areas and areas where children had to travel a great distance to school. The intent was to provide a nutritious breakfast to children who might otherwise not receive one.

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