

LEXINGTON PARK, MD – Today, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) and USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan visited the George Washington Carver Elementary School – where 3 out of every 4 students receives free and reduced-price meals – to discuss how the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act will help schools like Carver Elementary. Following the tour, Rep. Hoyer and Deputy Secretary Merrigan joined Pre-K students for lunch.

Of Carver Elementary's 549 students, 70 percent receive free school lunch, the highest proportion of such students in St. Mary's County. To qualify for free lunch, a student's family income must be 130% or below the federal poverty line (\$29,000 for a family of four) and for a reduced-price meal, income is between 131-185% of FPL (\$41,000 for a family of four).

“Access to nutritious meals is critical to a child's ability to learn and live a healthy life,” **stated Congressman Hoyer.**

“Making sure our children have the food they need must be a top priority, which is why I am so pleased that schools such as George Washington Carver Elementary School will benefit so greatly from the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. This legislation would provide additional funding so schools – like Carver – can provide healthier meals to their students, and I am pleased that recently proposed school meal nutrition changes will provide those children with more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and less saturated fat and sodium. I want to thank Deputy Secretary Merrigan for joining me for today's tour, and I look forward to continuing to work with the USDA and Maryland officials to ensure that we're doing all we can to assist Maryland families and promote and expand these critical programs.”

The recently proposed school meal nutrition changes will help students consume healthier foods and, for the first time, will require schools to adhere to different caloric guidelines for elementary, middle and high school students, as a means of addressing problems with

childhood obesity. In fact, almost 32 percent of children 6 to 19 years of age are overweight or obese (85th percentile of weight or higher).

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act also authorizes funds to help state departments of education to expand universal free breakfast opportunities. Carver Elementary currently participates in the Maryland Meals for Achievement program, whose model is being expanded through the new federal law. The school also participates in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, a partnership with Patuxent River Naval Air Station.

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