

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Kelly Donnelly (860-713-6525)

April 26, 2013

**STARTING THE DAY READY TO LEARN: INCREASING PROGRAM PARTICIPATION
FOCUS OF SECOND ANNUAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST SUMMIT**

*Governor Malloy, Commissioner Pryor, the No Kid Hungry Campaign Work to
Promote Academic Excellence*

HARTFORD, CT—Governor Dannel P. Malloy today joined State Department of Education Commissioner Stefan Pryor, the Connecticut Breakfast Expansion Team (CBET) at the Second Annual School Breakfast Summit. CBET, a collaboration of End Hunger CT!, the Connecticut No Kid Hungry campaign, the State Department of Education, the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut, the New England Dairy & Food Council, and Connecticut Action for Healthy Kids, brought together representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, school officials, and stakeholders to find ways to improve participation in the national School Breakfast Program.

“We’ve invested more than \$100 million in our schools, and poured millions into technology and infrastructure upgrades—but children who aren’t getting enough to eat cannot focus on learning,” said Governor Malloy. “The national School Breakfast Program ensures more students have a nutritious breakfast and start the day ready to learn. I applaud the advocates, administrators, and nutrition experts who are here today, for their work to strengthen education in every city and town throughout Connecticut.”

Studies indicate that students who do not regularly eat a nutritious breakfast are more likely to have lower math scores, poor cognitive function, slower memory recall, and are more likely to repeat a grade. For students who consistently start the day with breakfast, research shows that they attend 1.5 more days of school, score 17.5 percent higher on math tests, and are less likely to experience disciplinary problems.

“By eating a nutritious breakfast, students start their day ready to learn,” said Commissioner Pryor. “I’m grateful to our many partners, stakeholders, and staff for their collaborative efforts in promoting and providing access to the first and most important meal of the day.”

For the eighth consecutive year, Connecticut ranks last in the nation in the percentage of schools who participate in the federal School Lunch Program and also offer school breakfast.

“Students who eat school breakfast have been shown to behave better in the classroom and miss less school days, which leads to higher levels of academic achievement,” Lucy Nolan, Executive Director, End Hunger Connecticut!, a partner in the Connecticut No Kid Hungry campaign. “As a state, we owe students the opportunity to start the day well-nourished and ready to learn.”

“As school nutrition professionals, we should take every opportunity to teach and reinforce positive dietary habits,” said Susan Maffe, President of the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut. “Research consistently demonstrates that a nourishing breakfast helps students perform better academically and reduces absenteeism, tardiness, visits to the nurse, and behavioral issues.”

Winners of the Connecticut School Breakfast Challenge were announced during the Summit. Top honors went to the Sprague School District and North Canaan School District for their efforts to increase enrollment in the national School Breakfast Program. The Naugatuck School District and Plainville School District took second place, and the Windham School District and East Windsor School District took third place.

The Department of Administrative Services Commissioner Donald J. DeFronzo announced Old Saybrook Food Service Department and New Milford Food and Nutrition Services as the first and second place winners, respectively, of the USDA School Breakfast Innovation Challenge.

In addition, the USDA presented 31 school districts across the State with HealthierUS School Challenge Awards –Connecticut schools won a combined total of \$90,500 in awards.

"Connecticut joins an elite group of schools nationwide that have earned HealthierUS School status. Only about six percent of the nation's eligible schools have earned this distinction," said James Arena-DeRosa, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service Regional Administrator. "Connecticut has the additional distinction of having the most number of HealthierUS Schools in New England."

In recognition of their accomplishment, the CT No Kid Hungry campaign provided private cash prizes to awardees to enhance their school food service operations and wellness efforts in the district.

Administered by the USDA at the federal level, the State Department of Education manages the School Breakfast Program in Connecticut. Reimbursement is based on meals served and student eligibility for free or reduced priced lunch. State funding is available to schools defined as 'severe need', and CBET also administers grants for schools to start or expand school breakfast programs.

The second annual School Breakfast Summit is an initiative of the CBET. For more information, visit www.ctschoolbreakfast.org.

###

Contact: Kelly Donnelly
Director of Communications and Community Partnerships
Connecticut State Department of Education
Phone: 860-713-6525
Mobile: 860-983-1550
Email: Kelly.Donnelly@ct.gov