

PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE
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GUIDELINES: FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM AN ANALYSIS OF NEWS
COVERAGE AND LEGISLATIVE DEBATES
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>> Laura Burr: Good morning and welcome to today's Dialoge4Health Web Forum "Examining the Public Debate on School Food Nutrition Guidelines: Findings and Lessons Learned from an Analysis of News Coverage and Legislative Debates" brought to you by our partners Berkeley Media Studies Group and the Public Health Advocacy Institute. We also thank the Healthy Eating Research Program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for funding today's event. My name is Laura Burr and I'll be running today's Web Forum along with my colleague, Joanna Hathaway.

Before we get started, a couple of things to know about. First, realtime captioning is available provided by Christine of Home Team Captions. The caption window is on the right side of your screen. Click the Media Viewer icon on the top right of your screen. If you're on a Mac, you will see it on the bottom right of your screen. Next, locate the link in the captioning panel that says Show/Hide Header. If you click these links, you will see the captioning more easily. If the captioning window ever disappears, click the Media Viewer icon to bring it back again.

Today's Web Forum is listen only. That means that you can hear us but we can't hear you. That doesn't mean, though, that it won't be interactive. Please share your thoughts and questions about today's presentation by typing them into the Q&A box and we'll try to answer as many of your questions today as we can. The Q&A panel is located on the right side of your screen and it can be toggled on and off by clicking the Q&A icon on the top right of your screen or, again if you're on a Mac, you will see that on the bottom right of your screen. In the Q&A panel select "All panelists" in the dropdown menu so that your question gets sent to the right place. You can also use the Q&A box to communicate with me if you're having audio issues.

Today we're going to start off with a poll. You might be interested in seeing how others are attending this event. We'll bring up a quick poll so you can tell us where you're attending alone or in a group. And I can see folks entering their responses right now. So let us know if you're attending alone or in a small group of two to five people, in a larger group of six to 10, or perhaps you're in a large room today with all of your colleagues, and that would be more than 10 people. Let us know who you are attending with. If you didn't make a choice, please select one and then hit the submit button.

We can close the poll now. And not surprisingly, almost everybody is attending individually. That's 90%. And we have about 9% in groups of two to five people.

Thank you for taking our poll.

Now it's my pleasure to introduce our moderator today, Pamela Mejia, from the Berkeley Media Studies Group. As Senior Media Researcher for BMSG, Pamela leads qualitative and quantitative analysis of how the media portrays public health and social justice issues including sexual

and family violence, teen dating violence, childhood trauma, community violence prevention, food marketing to children, sugary drink regulation, and tobacco control. I'm very pleased to welcome Pamela to Dialogue4Health and I hope you all enjoy today's event.

I will move it over to Pamela now.

Welcome, Pamela.

>> Pamela Mejia: Hello. Thank you so much. I hope everyone can hear me.

Again, it's a huge pleasure to be here and to have the opportunity to introduce my colleague, Laura Nixon, who is a Media Researcher here at Berkeley Media Studies Group. I'll say a bit about Laura, a little bit about Mark, and then I'm very excited to pass this over to them and hear everything that they have to say. Both as a researcher and as a mom, this is a topic very close to my heart. So I'm really interested to hear as I know we all are.

Laura is, as I said, a Media Researcher here at Berkeley Media Studies Group. She analyzes how the media talks about different public health issues, including a whole range of things from reproductive justice to food marketing and school foods and everything in between. She has a Bachelor's in sociology and has worked internationally on a range of issues. She's been with BMSG for four years. I'm really excited for you guys to hear from her today because she's a superlative researcher and presenter.

It's also my pleasure to introduce Mark Gottlieb who is the Executive Director of the Public Health Advocacy Institute based out of Boston, Massachusetts. His work has focused on researching tobacco litigation as a public health strategy and he is will be adjunct professor at Northeastern University School of Law. We have worked with PHAI and Mark on different projects over the years. It's always a pleasure. Their work is always off the charts.

Before I pass this over to them, I want to make sure that I thank our funders, the Healthy Eating. This work was funded by a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. And I also want to thank the project teams here at BMSG as well as PHAI, including a number of fantastic researchers whose work you're going to see reflected today.

I also want to thank Liana Winett and Larry Wallack at Portland State University for the tremendous work you're about to see.

With that said, I'm going to pass this over to Laura Nixon. And she is going to get us started on thinking about what the public discourse around school food looks like.

Laura, take it away.

>> Laura Nixon: Thanks, Pam.

Good morning, and good afternoon to everyone. I'm excited to be able to talk a little bit about our research today.

Before I launch into our findings, I did want to say just a word about Berkeley Media Studies Group and what we do. At Berkeley Media Studies Group we do three main things: we research how the news covers public health issues, we do media advocacy training and strategic complication for media groups and advocates, and we also do a little bit of professional education for journalists.

And for that first piece about researching the news, I wanted to talk a little bit about why we do that. We know that the news has a few key functions. We know that it sets the agenda. It helps to determine what we think about it -- sorry, what we think about, if a subject is in the news, it tends to be talked about. If it's not, it tends not to be talked about. The news also shapes the debate. It affects how we think about issues and in particular what kind of solutions we think about for issues in public health. And finally, we know that the news has the power to reach opinion leaders. And for many opinion leaders, if they don't have personal experience in the issues, the news may be the only place where they learn about that issue. So in that sense it really affects what we do about public health issues like school nutrition.

For this project we wanted to look at the state level debate about the implementation of the Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act, school nutrition guidelines. So the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act was passed at the end of 2010, and it contained these guidelines. And we want to the know -- ok, we know a little bit about what the national debate looks like around that but what's happening on the ground in

the states, particularly as these policies are being implemented? And we looked at two different things. We looked at news coverage and we also looked at legislative and regulatory history to understand the conversations in both of those two places.

In order to look at the state level debates, we chose 10 different states based on input from our advisory group on this project. And we tried to select a range of states from different regions, different approaches to implementing the federal guidelines, and sort of different political leanings and demographics. Once we had those 10 states, we searched for new searches within that state so newspapers, weekly magazines, any sort of news source within that state between the middle of 2012 and the end of 2015. There were a lot of articles. So we randomly sampled 20% to do our in-depth analysis. We developed a coding instrument, and then also went through a process to ensure that coder agreement was not by chance.

And first I'm just going to talk you through a little bit about what the coverage looks like overall. And then we're going to be talking specifically about the debate around it, what were the arguments for and against, who was speaking, that sort of thing. But first we'll just talk a little bit about the general shape of the coverage.

To start that off, here is the volume of coverage that we saw. And, again, the number of articles on the side, remember, this was a 20% sample. So the actual number is higher than this but this is a random sample. So it sort of generalizes out that higher number of articles about these debates.

And you can see that in 2012, even though that was just a partial year, this was almost the same amount of coverage as 2013. And so with that initial implementation, there was quite a bit of coverage. And then we saw another spike in 2014.

We saw a little bit of a range of how much news coverage there was by state. You can see that the top couple of states, so Massachusetts, California, Illinois, are all states where there are major media outlets in those states; whereas some of the other states, even if the population was fairly high, there wasn't as much coverage.

And I apologize. My laptop has lost power. I don't know if one of the other presenters can jump in for me here.

>> Pamela Mejia: Hi there. So I'll continue to work through -- talk through this while Laura is resuscitating her laptop.

This gives an indication of where some of the key coverage is coming from. let's see. I want to visualize that for you by showing this map, which is going to give an indication. Again, this is kind of -- we're seeing things from around the country, looking at things from around the country, see a certain amount of concentration in the middle but to the best of our ability we did look at our range of states. You'll see that California and -- what is that over there, the 16% did kind of dominate but we saw things from around the area, around the region.

One question that we always ask ourselves is about what kind of news -- what kind of stories appeared in the news. This is because we know that opinion coverage can really help signal to the public and to policymakers that there is interest and engagement around a particular issue. In the case of school food, there's interest and engagement around an issue that affects our children.

What we found, however, is that there is a real paucity of opinion coverage as it relates to this issue. The vast majority was straight news coverage, coming from line reporters, with a certain number of op-eds and very few numbers of things like letters to the editor column, etc.

I'm going to pass this back to Laura who says she's back onboard and is going to be able to give us a bit more detail and more nuance into what we found in the coverage.

Laura?

>> Laura Nixon: Great. Thanks, Pam. I apologize. Hopefully that will be our only technical snafu of the day.

Pam, can you pass me the presenter ball back?

In addition to looking at what type of news coverage, the news coverage of the guidelines, we also wanted to look at whether the coverage was talking about yield guidelines or competitor food

guidelines, and specifically things like smart snack. And what we found is in the news coverage it was really dominated by meals. You didn't see a whole lot of coverage about competitive food.

And this varied a little bit by state. As you can see, Oklahoma was one of the states where there was a higher percentage of news coverage that was focused on competitive foods. Most of that was about what was sort of known as their cupcake amnesty policy where they were putting quite a few of exemptions for fundraiser. And something similar happened in Texas; whereas, you see again, West Virginia, all of their coverage was about meals versus competitive foods.

And we looked, also, at why stories about school nutritional guidelines were in the news. This is what we call at BMSG a news hook. So when a reporter goes to write a story, they have to know it's not enough to just provide information; they also have to know why is this going to be in the news today. Why would our readers want to know about this? And that's what we think of as a news hook. And what we found is that by far most of the articles about the school food guidelines were in the news because of some kind of milestone in either state or local policy. And that includes -- I'll show you this in the next slide. That includes school nutrition guidelines that were not related to the act but most of that is the state level and local implementation of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act guidelines.

Even though we were looking at state level news sources, we did also see quite a few articles that were in the news about federal policies, some kind of milestones, some kind of hearing or legislative action or some kind of regulatory action. And we saw some stories that were more feature stories about something that was going on locally and also the release of a report or data about school food or the guidelines.

And we're going to take a look -- so we can see the first two are looking at which types of policy, was it some kind of state or local policy, federal policy? So we're going to look more in-depth at that.

So when we looked at what types of guidelines, what types of actions about the guidelines, were being talked about, most of the coverage -- the most common reason for the coverage was state implementation of the federal guidelines. And we also had commentary or updates on the federal guidelines. So this was more just, you know, you either had a news story or an opinion piece in that local, state and local news source that was talking about what was happening federally but they weren't really tying it to what was going on at the state level.

And finally, we also had state or local food policy actions and congressional actions of debate. So those state or local food policy actions, that refers to policies at the state level or the local level that were not related to Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. So this is just something -- for example, Massachusetts policy for school foods that they passed. I think a little bit before this time period. And then finally, we did see some news coverage that was focused on congressional action or debate at the federal level.

And that's a good segue. So now we saw the news coverage was mostly about straight news, mostly about meals, a lot about the state implementation of the federal guidelines. And now we're going to look -- that was what was in the news. But what were people saying about the guidelines? What were they saying for and against? Who was showing up in the news?

This was just a breakdown looking at the arguments that we found for, in support of the nutrition guidelines, and those that were against the nutrition guidelines or were critical of the nutrition guidelines. You can see that overall there's slightly more arguments in support of the guidelines than against them but that split changes over time.

So in 2012 that first year when the policy is being implemented, we were much more likely to see arguments in support of the guidelines. And we saw fewer arguments that were critical of the guidelines, that were speaking negatively about them. But then in 2013 and 2014, you're really seeing more of an even split between sort of pro guidelines and anti-guidelines.

We're not entirely sure why this shift happened. And in some ways we'll be interested to hear what participants think why might this have happened. It may be that sort of at implementation in some of the later implementation came in there was more resistance and more issues at the state and local

level. It also may be a reflection of the conversations that were going on at the federal level. In particular, the pushback and backlash that was happening at the congressional level federally.

You can see -- so this is looking at the pro and anti-arguments in a slightly different way. On the left we have state or local school food policies. So, again, these are policies that are not related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. This is just a state level or local level policy about school food nutrition guidelines whether for meals or for competitive foods. And when those types of policies were in the news, the coverage was overwhelmingly positive. You can see almost 80% to 20%. You didn't really see a lot of opposition. When there was state level implementation of the federal guidelines, it was a little bit less positive. You saw a little bit more criticism of the guidelines. And then when you get to the federal guidelines and to coverage of congressional action, you start to see more critical coverage of the guidelines.

And now we take a look at not just -- about what people were saying in support of school nutrition. And we found that more and more people were speaking in support of the school nutrition guidelines but there was quite a range of arguments. You can see the top argument that we had, that this policy makes the food healthier, was only about 15% of the arguments we saw. So there was a pretty wide range.

And we also saw things like kids approve of the changes, that kids' health demands and immediate response was talking about the obesity epidemic, that we needed to get more nutritious foods, those kinds of arguments. The idea is that the changes would help produce health benefits. So this is similar to the policy makes food healthier but this was kind of going -- this was when people took it a little step further, not just saying this will make the food healthier but it will actually make kids healthier. This will have an impact on kids' health.

We also saw the policy is working and we should keep the guidelines. And one shift that we saw over time is that -- one that's not on this chart because it was a little bit less common was in the earlier part of our study period we saw more arguments about -- we called it the you can do it argument, of people saying like, schools are doing it, this is possible, we can do it. And as you would expect, as time went on and as implementation kept going, those arguments started to drop and we started to see more of these arguments like the policy is working and we should keep the guidelines. What that says to me is as kids, and people involved, were doing a pretty good job of holding up the success of the program and talking about that as implementation was continuing to roll out.

Now let's take a look at the arguments that were critical of the school nutrition guidelines. You can see that four of the arguments opposing school nutrition guidelines, there were fewer of them. This isn't a complete list but, as you can see, the top one is over 25%. And that top argument was: Kids are not going to eat the food, they're not going to like it, they're going to throw it away, and they're going to drop out of the school lunch program because of these changes. You also saw arguments about the guidelines being too challenging and the idea that the small portions would make kids go hungry and also some arguments about government overreach, that this wasn't an appropriate role for government or that this won't be an appropriate role for the federal government specifically.

One thing to note here is that there were some differences between what we saw in terms of competitive foods and meals. But as you might expect, for competitive foods, we really didn't see very many arguments about that the small portions would make kids go hungry. Instead, we saw more arguments about that the policy wasn't needed or that local solutions would be better. Those were some of what we saw more when we looked specifically at competitive foods.

I forgot to mention -- I'll talk a little bit about the difference that we saw for the pro side. Back one slide.

So when we looked at meals versus competitive foods for the supporting arguments, we saw more in terms of for meals, we saw more of kids approve of the changes and also a little bit more of policy -- the guidelines that wasn't as common with competitive foods whereas with competitive foods there was more discussion talking about the idea that other alternatives were not healthy, that the food that was being served now was not healthy and that it needed to be changed.

And now we will move forward to talk about who spoke in the news. So what are the voices that are showing up in this coverage at the state level? What we saw is that the main folks who were talking were school nutrition staff, either at the school level or district level, typically. We saw kids and students, federal elected officials, federal non-elected officials, and school administrators. So that's principals, school board members, those kinds of things.

And we saw quite a difference in terms of how critical or supportive those speakers were of the guidelines. So this is arranged in descending order of sort of criticalness of the guidelines. So you can see that federal elected officials were overwhelmingly critical of the guidelines. This was mostly Congress people. For school administrators, also tended to be critical of the guidelines and showed kids and students were often -- who were more likely to be critical of the guidelines than to be supportive. For kids and students, it tended to be arguments about, you know, we don't like it. I liked my pizza from before, those kinds of things and the idea of, oh, these portions are too small.

When we looked to the nutrition staff -- and, again, this was actually the biggest volume, the most -- the speaker that we saw the most in the news. They were actually slightly more supportive than critical of the guidelines.

And then unsurprisingly, since this is the USDA and the folks putting out these guidelines, they were overwhelmingly supportive of the guidelines and made lots of arguments in support.

And one thing that's not on this chart that I wanted to flag is we also looked at teachers. Teachers didn't appear very often in the coverage but I was surprised to find that when teachers did appear in the coverage, it was 100% negative. We didn't find any supportive arguments from teachers in the coverage about the school food guidelines. And typically, when they were talking about it, they would be talking about sort of relaying what the kids were saying, saying, oh, the kids don't like it, the kids are going hungry, that kind of thing. So we'll talk about that a little bit later when we talk about implications and takeaways.

And one of the last things I'll mention is that we also looked for any mention of equity or health disparities. So whether that had to do with regional disparities, economic disparities or racial disparities. And we found that the vast majority of articles did not mention health disparities. And we actually found no references to race or racial disparities in the coverage. Most of that 8% that was presented was about either regional differences or socioeconomic differences.

So just to run through a little bit of what we talked about, most of the articles that we found were about state implementation of the federal guidelines. And they mainly focused on meals.

The arguments against the guidelines increased in 2013 and 2014. And when we broke that down, looking at what types of policies were getting positive and negative coverage, we found that local actions received the most positive news coverage. And as I just mentioned, the disparities were largely absent in the news coverage.

And with that, I will pass things over and here's my contact information. These will be available in the slides afterwards.

I will pass things over to Mark to talk about our legislative research.

>> Mark Gottlieb: Thank you so much, Laura. It is so great to have the chance to collaborate once again with the Berkeley Media Studies Group on this work. On behalf of our team, which includes myself, Emily Nink, who crunched the numbers and did the coding on our work, and Lissy Friedman who delved into the various databases to pull the documents, thank you so much. And thanks for all the attendees for having an interest in understanding the debate around the school nutritional guidelines and what happened and what it means.

You know, one key difference between the legislative and regulatory data that we at the Public Health Advocacy Institute examined and the news data is that we looked at the formal process of policy-making itself and not the news coverage about the policy-making. So, you know, what were the arguments made about school food nutrition standards in the policy-making? Who was making them? And where were they being made in those policy-making efforts? Those are the things we were focusing on, which is really a bit different from looking at the coverage of those issues. And I think some of those differences will be reflected in what we saw.

And I have the ball. Good.

So, we had a slightly less straight forward method for collecting our data than the Berkeley Media Studies Group folks had in that it wasn't just -- I hate -- I'm not putting down your method, but we had to go into multiple databases and try to pull things up to try to get a full picture of what were the arguments and who were the voices in policy-making.

So we started by pulling all of the proposed state regulations by state administrative agencies and all of the bills that were proposed in state legislators in the 10 states, you know, using typical search strings like school and nutrition, school food, schools and snacks. And we also relied on -- well, we triangulated our data with the University of Connecticut's Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity which has really helpful legislative database by state. We triangulated with them. That was very helpful.

And for each bill that was filed, we then tried to collect what we call its legislative history. We'd try to see if there were any committee actions or any votes taken on those bills. Did they go anywhere? And if there were like an assignment to a legislative committee, we would then look for any record of that committee's work. And that was where it gets a little more difficult. To do that, we would do Google searches using the bill number, the state name, and the committee name to see what we could find. Similarly for the regulatory history, this is where a state administrative agency proposes rules around school food and nutritional standards.

We would have to go through state by state -- each state's register where they published notices of upcoming hearings, which they're required to by law, or opportunities for comment. And for that we also did Google searches using the regulation number, the name of the administrative agency, for example, you know, the state's Department of Education that was holding a hearing, to find any record of hearing proceedings or comments made on the record as part of the policy-making process.

We used a slightly modified version of the coding instrument that was developed by Berkeley Media Studies Group to accommodate things like bill numbers and the type of document and that sort of thing. And the time period that we chose, July of 2012 to December 2015, was an interesting one. And that's why we chose it, with the advice of our Advisory Committee, because it captured the state rollouts of the USDA's Smart Snacks program, which was an important component of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, which created minimum nutritional standards for foods that were sold at schools that aren't part of the lunch or breakfast program, as you probably know. These include the a la carte items that are sold in the cafeteria and foods sold in school stores, snack bars, vending machines, and also foods and beverages sold during fundraisers. Unless the items that are -- you know, one exemption is that if items are not intended for consumption at the school, they are automatically exempted. Otherwise the states have to create an exemption. And they can only be created -- this is to have fundraisers with foods that don't meet these minimum nutritional guidelines.

So exemptions can only be created by enacting them at the state level through either legislation or regulation. So states that have not created legal fundraiser exemptions from the Smart Snacks requirements, they have to follow them in bake sales or other foods or beverages that are sold to benefit the school, which they often don't want to do because they think they're going to sell less food and make less money if the foods that they are selling comply with the nutritional standards.

So this is the reason why this is an important time to examine what was going on. You can see that we have a smattering of documents with one big spike in September 2014 that coincided with a hearing on regulations in Massachusetts. And that resulted in sort of a spike in data.

And this is an example of some of the -- examples of some of the pieces of legislation or regulations that were proposed. We can see that there were a number of them that were proposed at the beginning of 2013. And then you have hearings later in the year and bills signed or passed towards the end of the year or early 2014.

And here we have a partial listing of some of those measures and their dates of introduction. You can see here there's more than just Smart Snacks exemptions that were being considered. Illinois, notably, had a serious policy-making effort focusing on banning trans fats in public schools. But most of the policy proposals had to do with the compliance with the Smart Snacks standards and many of them, particularly with exemptions for fundraising.

So here we see the number of documents by state that we were able to find with Massachusetts having the most followed by Oklahoma. Oklahoma was a state that was bound and determined to have exemptions for fundraisers and did so by creating exemptions from the nutritional guidelines for fundraisers for 16 months of every year. So they were very certain that there was no time in the year when they couldn't have an exemption for their fundraisers.

And we see really Massachusetts having a lot -- Oklahoma, Texas, Illinois, and Illinois also had the trans fats proposals, West Virginia, fewer in California than one might think, and down the line.

You may want to know what type of documents, food policy proposal documents, we found. And the majority of the documents were -- consisted of testimony. Usually testimony in front of a regulatory body or comments submitted to a regulatory body. After that there were legislative materials such as markups of the bills that were proposed, committee actions, amendments.

The proposed regulations themselves comprised only 13% of the documents we found and only 11% of the documents were the actual proposed bills.

And not surprisingly, the final regulations were only 10%. And other goodies such as minutes of meetings or meet agendas comprised only 8% of the 187 documents that we found.

And what were these documents about? What policies were we talking about? Meals, school lunch, school breakfasts, or competitive foods and Smart Snacks. The vast majority of the documents dealt with competitive foods, 85%, while only 9% dealt with school lunch or school breakfast. 6% of the documents addressed both. And this may have been largely where there was public comment or testimony that alluded to school lunches as well as competitive foods.

And along those same lines we saw that 84% of the documents we located were about implementing the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, nutritional guidelines, particularly around Smart Snacks and competitive foods. And only 16% of the documents addressed other state food policy action that wasn't related to implementation of the guidelines.

And here we see mentions of various programs in the documents. We see the Smart Snacks got the most mentions. The National School Lunch Program, although it wasn't the topic of very many of these policy proposals, did get mentioned quite frequently along with the congressional legislation that started the whole thing, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. And then a couple of mentions of local wellness policies in these documents.

And, you know, how many of these were pro nutritional guidelines versus anti. We saw in the documents where there was at least one argument made -- and some of our documents didn't have any arguments. A regulation that's proposed, for example, might not have a particular argument associated with it. And one might be implied but where there was an explicit argument made we found that 2/3, 67%, of them were pro guidelines and 14% were anti-nutritional guidelines with a 19% being mixed messages or unclear.

So the majority were pro, by far. And this differs with what I think we saw in the news. As you can see here, where you have news that was primarily opposed to the guidelines in a particular state, the percentage of arguments in support of the guidelines and policy documents was higher. So you have an inverse relationship really in every state except Massachusetts. In Massachusetts, you've got 45% of the news arguments opposing the guidelines and 55% in favor, which is a majority in favor. But the majority in favor of the guidelines in the policy documents is much more dramatically demonstrated with 86% in favor versus 14% opposed.

And this is a curious phenomenon, the fact that the argument's being made in formal policy-making, the majority of them are the opposite of the majority of arguments being made in the news. So if you get a sense of what the support is for a particular nutrition policy through the news it might not be reflected in the policy-making process itself.

So the types of arguments against the nutritional guidelines that we saw were primarily that they're too challenging, too costly to implement and that exemptions are needed. There weren't that many, as you see. We only had 34 arguments opposed in the documents that we were able to find.

And of the arguments in favor of the guidelines, the majority were that they would allow food service directors to provide healthy options; then they'll make foods healthier or they will be good for children's health.

Now, some of that may be because there were some form letters sent in, particularly in Massachusetts, from food service directors which said that the policy would allow food service directors to provide healthy options. So that probably explains why that was the most common pro argument in the data that we had.

And that also is reflected here in terms of understanding who was speaking in these policy-making processes. We had 37 of 91 were school or district staff, including those food service directors or nutrition service staff, followed by institutions or agency representatives. Occasionally we would have a child or an industry rep or very occasionally public health or healthcare representative that would speak on the record during the policy-making process but relatively few of those.

And we also looked at the frequency of references to health disparities and found very few references in the policy-making documents. A fair number of references interestingly to industry partnerships but not much on disparities which is similar to what was found in the news coverage.

And that's what we located in our 187 documents. Some of these are different from what we saw in the news but just a lot of similarities as well.

I'll pass it back to Laura to lead the discussion or start us off talking about the implications and takeaways from our data and its analysis.

>> Laura Nixon: Great. Thank you, Mark.

I just want to encourage any attendees -- Mark and I will be talking about the implications and takeaways that we're thinking about from this data but we would also love to hear from you. You can just put that in the Q&A what things are you taking away from what we've shared today.

I'll just say a few things. One, Pam mentioned earlier that most of the coverage that we saw about school nutrition guidelines was straight and new coverage. We didn't see a whole lot of opinion coverage like letters to the editors, op-eds, editorials, that kind of thing. And we know that that -- a really powerful way -- we know that that can be a really powerful way for folks that are advocating for policy like this get into the media. And we feel that's an opportunity for in the future people who are working on school nutrition guidelines to use opinion space in that way, to increase their ability in the news.

Another, as I mentioned, the speakers that we saw. We saw, for example, school administrators and teachers tended to be -- make fairly critical comments about the nutrition guidelines in the news. And that also seems like an opportunity where could there be some coalition building or that kind of thing particularly at the state and local level to look at how can we get school administrators and teachers onboard with these types of guidelines so that it's sort of a united front and united voice about this is important, this is why.

And finally, one point that I wanted to make -- when we looked at what kind of support was there in the news, the news coverage was most supportive when it was local policy or state-level policy versus when it was talking about the federal policy. And I don't know if there's a particular implication for this but one thing is just to be aware that that federal, that national conversation really does have a pretty big effect on -- even though we were just looking at state-level news, there was still quite a bit of conversation about that federal level what was going on. And I'm not quite sure what the answer is about how to address that but I think that it's something that's good to be aware of.

Actually my last point is, as we mentioned and Mark just mentioned, we really didn't see any discussion of the communities that are most at risk for obesity and nutrition-related diseases, no mention of race in the news coverage. And that seems like a gap that could be important.

>> Mark Gottlieb: So I guess some of the good news from that is that there is that opportunity as we move forward to really have our voices heard more, both in the news and in opinion coverage and writing letters to the editor or op-eds.

And also, I think it was striking how few the variety of voices were considered in the policy-making process. And that advocates for children's health and nutrition really have a good

chance, as new policies are developed at the state and local level, to get involved to provide testimony, to submit comments to have their important data considered and their opinions heard during the policy-making process.

And I thought it was also striking that there was this disconnect between the types -- the arguments made in the news and that made in the policy-making context in each state in virtually every state. You will know, if the arguments were primarily anti-guidelines in the news, they were pro guidelines -- the arguments were pro guidelines in legislative and regulatory policy-making. That was striking. And it also suggests that more voices need to be heard because ideally you'd think that those would line up a little bit more; that those would reflect the same conversation. But it seems like there were different conversations and arguments in the news versus in policy-making contexts.

>> Laura Nixon: I see in our Q&A there are a couple of folks who are asking about what public health professionals and others can do to make sure that the points that you think are important are in the news, such as disparities, equity, the perspective of people of color. And I think that there are a couple of general comments that I can make about that.

One, as I mentioned, opinion coverage is one of the of easiest ways to be in that conversation. And that includes writing letters to the editor, writing op-eds, also meeting with the editorial boards of local news outlets is an important way. And then you start looking at sort of the more journalism. With that, one important thing is to prioritize creating relationships with reporters and editors. Before our advice was always take a reporter out for coffee. Now our advice is follow the reporter on Twitter and that can be a great way to connect. And when you have that created relationship, you've talked to them, you've said, hey, I loved this piece that you did on this or that kind of thing or have you thought about this, then when you have a story to pitch, it's much easier.

And we typically think about news in two different ways when we're thinking about how to influence a conversation. One is reactive. So something happened related to school food. Maybe it's a policy that's happened in the state, like what happened in Oklahoma or Texas that is, you know, not great, and so maybe you're being asked to comment on that. And so being ready to frame the conversation in the way that you would like to be able to see it to think through what are those main points, and to piggyback off of those news moments.

And then also you want to think about how you can create news proactively. So not just when the legislators are doing something but what are some creative ways to create news about the issues to make more visible some of the issues that you care about. For example, the fact that this is a policy that is really making a difference for kids of color or that kind of thing. And there are a number of ways to do that. One is releasing reports, public health is very good at that. But you know, holding events and a whole range of different ideas.

And our website is a good resource, BMSG.org, if you want more information about those kinds of recommendations.

>> Mark Gottlieb: I would piggyback on that by suggesting that sometimes there's just not enough coverage of these issues and coverage can be generated through your relationships with reporters. I'd recommend highly going to the Rudd Center's legislative database which is really easy to use. Enter your state and see what policies, what bills are pending. There may be a news story there. There may be an important policy-making opportunity that's actually going on right now that deserves news coverage. And if you know that and if you've seen the text of that bill and you understand what the policy is, you can either work on developing an opinion piece or just try to get some coverage of it. And that will bring those conversations out.

>> Pamela Mejia: Thank you all so much for attending today and for the great questions. It's fantastic insight and feedback from our panelists. We are hitting right at noon so I want to make sure we wrap up with plenty of time.

I do, again, want to thank Laura and Mark for being here today and the Dialogue4Health crew, Joanna and Laura Burr, for supporting -- for providing all of this support and enabling us to speak with you guys today.

We did provide contact information for all the participants -- for all the panelists. So please don't hesitate to get in touch. The recording and slides will be made available on Dialogue4Health.org, as you can see on the slide that is currently on the screen.

Laura, Laura Burr, I don't know if you have any final comments or thoughts you want to share, anything we need to do to wrap up?

>> Laura Burr: Thank you. We just want to thank all of you and Pamela, Laura, and Mark for your presentation today. A big thanks to PHAI and BMSG for partnering with us on this event.

And thanks to our audience. As she mentioned, a recording will be available next week at Dialogue4Health.org. You will also receive an e-mail from us with a link to a brief survey. And we hope you'll take it. We really want to know your thoughts concerning this Web Forum, and especially what topics you'd be interested in for future Web Forums. Please be sure to take a couple of moments to take our survey. We'd really like to hear from you.

Thanks so much for being with us today. That concludes today's Web Forum.
Have a great day.