

Meet the Speakers & Panelists

Laura Benavidez

*Co-Director, Food Service Division
Los Angeles Unified School District*

Ms. Benavidez is the current interim Co-Director of Food Services for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the second largest school district. Ms. Benavidez works with the Food Services team to ensure more than 134.4 million breakfast, lunch, snacks and supper meals are offered to more than 600,000 students at over 1,100 locations every year.

Ms. Benavidez oversees the logistics of the program including menu, inventory, technology, policies/procedures, purchasing and contracts. She is also the Spanish media liaison. For the last three years, she has managed the Breakfast in the Classroom program which serves more than 340,000 meals daily, increasing breakfast meal participation by more than 80%. Ms. Benavidez has also overseen the implementation of the District's cafeteria management system and the MyPaymentsPlus system for parents.

The LAUSD menu meets and exceeds the USDA guidelines included in the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 and has been recognized by the Healthier US Schools Recognition, the Whole Grain Council, and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.

Nancy Berlin

*Policy Director
California Association of Nonprofits*

Nancy is Policy Director for California Association of Nonprofits (CalNonprofits). She directs and oversees policy initiatives that protect and promote California's nonprofits, including state and federal legislative and administrative issues, and develops and implements campaigns to encourage advocacy and civic engagement among its more than 10,000 organizational members.

Nancy was the former director of California Partnership and project coordinator for the Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger & Homelessness. She is well known to the California nonprofit and advocacy community through her leadership in advocacy in Sacramento and throughout California. Recognitions include Outstanding Public Citizen of the Year Award from the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers and the Community Building and Justice Award from Alexandria House.

Anna Colby

*Nutrition Policy Advocate
California Food Policy Advocates*

Anna is a Nutrition Policy Advocate for the California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA), where she focuses on policy solutions and advocacy efforts to improve school meal access, quality and appeal. In addition, she conducts research and data analysis to support policy solutions. Prior to joining CFPA in 2015, Anna was the assistant director of the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute of the University of Southern California (USC). Anna has a Master of Science in Geographic Information Science and Technology and Master of Public Policy from USC.

Raymond Diaz

*Program Coordinator
National Health Foundation*

Raymond is a Program Coordinator at the National Health Foundation (NHF) where he works as an Adult Ally on Positive Youth Development programs including the Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention program. As an adult ally, Raymond works with students to address issues of health equity by focusing on school food policies and introducing system changes to promote health and wellness in underserved communities. Raymond has also contributed to the creation of LAUSD Blueprint for Wellness through the Nutrition and Physical Activity Task Force. Prior to his work with NHF, Raymond developed and collaborated with organizations geared towards



promoting diversity in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math such as the American Chemical Society and the Educational Opportunity Program. Raymond holds a Bachelor's of Science in Health Science from the University of California, Santa Cruz. He is also a Co-Founder of Hermanos Unidos de Santa Cruz.

Joann Lo
Co-Director
Food Chain Workers Alliance

Joann is the Co-Director of the Food Chain Workers Alliance and was the first staff member of the Alliance when she began in November 2009. The daughter of immigrants from Taiwan, she graduated from Yale University with a degree in Environmental Biology and has organized with both unions and a worker center. In 2000 Joann was one of two staff who started the Garment Worker Center, and she organized with garment workers in Los Angeles who led a successful campaign against retailer Forever 21, memorialized in the Emmy-winning documentary "Made in L.A." In 2005 Joann joined Enlace, an alliance of worker centers and unions and a year later became Co-Director. Joann is the Chair of the Leadership Board of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Domestic Fair Trade Association, the City of Los Angeles' Sweatfree Advisory Committee and the Enlace Institute Advisory Board.

Elizabeth Medrano
Community Organizer
Healthy School Food Coalition

Elizabeth is the Community Organizer for the Healthy School Food Coalition, a Program of the Urban & Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College. She works with parents, students, and advocates through policy and advocacy training and action toward implementation of all the food and nutrition policies approved by the Board of Education in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Elizabeth has also provided technical assistance on school food policy in districts such as Long Beach Unified, Compton Unified and Whittier School District. In 2012, she authored a *School Food Policy & Organizing Toolkit* and has trained dozens of agencies to use this manual and help share knowledge of school nutrition policies and expand policy enforcement. She also collaborates on public water access through a research, education and policy initiative called "Water Works." Currently, Elizabeth is working on a case study about school cafeterias and community action in Los Angeles and Long Beach.

Tracey Patterson
Director of Legislation
California Food Policy Advocates

Tracey is the Director of Legislation of the California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA). She also leads CFPA's work on school meal quality and afterschool nutrition in an effort to ensure that student meals are nutritious, appealing and accessible. Prior to joining CFPA in 2013, she had a decade of experience in health and education. Tracey has led efforts with policy makers, public schools, community-based organizations and coalitions, academics/researchers, and public health departments. She has a Master of Public Health from the City University of New York.

Christopher Wong
Food Donor Coordinator
Food Finders

Christopher is the Food Donor Coordinator for Food Finders, a non-profit food recovery organization. He is in charge of new and existing food donors, such as coordinating donations from school sites. In addition, he oversees the Food 4 Kids program. It provides bags of non-perishable groceries to low income elementary students and their families for weekend consumption within Long Beach. He has over five years of experience in the grocery industry, so he has seen firsthand the amount of waste generated in the community. In his free time, Christopher enjoys traveling around the world.

