**AB 2449 Sample Support Letter to the Appropriations Committee**

**Please submit your updated support letter by COB Friday, Aug 8, 2014**

**Phone calls in support can be made to the Senate Appropriations Chair at (916) 651- 4022.**

AB 2449 (Bocanegra) will soon be heard at the Senate Appropriations Suspense File Hearing.

AB 2449- *Adequate Time to Eat: Lunchtime Supports Learning* would:

* Amend the existing State Meal Mandate to ensure that students have adequate time to eat lunch after being served.
* Emphasize the crucial role that nutrition plays in supporting academic achievement and student health and well-being.
* More efficiently spend existing resources that support school meals, while improving student health and reducing food waste.

We encourage organizations, groups, and individuals to use the sample letter below or call the Assembly Appropriation Committee in support of AB 2449. Please send your letter of support to:

**Fax to Senator De Leon, Appropriations Chair at (916) 327-8817**

**Please “cc” CFPA by faxing a copy to 510.433.1131 or emailing a copy to** [**tracey@cfpa.net**](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CTracey%5CDownloads%5Ctracey%40cfpa.net)**.**

**If you are unable to fax, email your letter to** **tracey@cfpa.net** **and request that we fax it for you.**

Questions? Contact Tracey Patterson at 510.433.1122 x101 or tracey@cfpa.net

Date

The Honorable De León

Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee

State Capitol, Room 5108

Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SUPPORT for AB 2449 (Bocanegra)

Dear Senator De León,

(Name of your organization) is writing in support of AB 2449, legislation designed to ensure that California students have adequate time to eat lunch at school.

Lunch is an essential part of the school day. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) makes nutritionally balanced, low or no-cost meals available to all students. For many low-income students, school lunch may be the most nutritious meal of the day. California has invested significant resources in improving school meals, but many students miss out on the benefits of school lunch due to time pressures, such as long lines and wait times, insufficient points of service, and scheduling constraints. When students do not have enough time to eat a complete lunch, they throw away portions of their meal, buy less nutritious snacks instead, or skip lunch entirely. When students are not given enough time to eat during the school day we fail in meeting our responsibility to support student health and achievement.

Since 2006, the California Department of Education (CDE) has recommended that schools provide all students with at least 20 minutes to eat lunch after being served. Yet, a 2013 CDE survey on lunch time, conducted with over 1,000 schools, found that only 28.1% of elementary principals and 44.8% of middle/high school principals reported meeting this recommendation. Research shows that the length of lunch periods and the amount of time students spend waiting in lunch lines can impact participation in the school lunch program. Decreased participation in the lunch program also leads to decreased revenue to districts.

We support AB 2449 because (choose one or more of the following reasons or add your own):

* **Nutrition plays a critical role in supporting academic achievement and student behavior.** Research definitively links nutrition with student behavior and performance. Common sense points to a wide range of benefits for students who are properly nourished throughout the school day. When students don’t have enough time to eat, the health and academic benefits of nutritious school meals are lost.
* **AB 2449 would improve student nutrition and reduce food waste.** California’s implementation of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 has greatly improved the nutritional quality of school food. School districts are working hard to make meals more healthful and appealing to students. These efforts are hindered when students don’t have enough time to eat during their lunch periods. Research shows that when students are given sufficient time to eat, they consume more nutrients and less food is wasted.
* **AB 2449 would more effectively spend critical resources that support school meals.** Existing funds from the NSLP and the supplemental State Meal Program support the costs associated with providing students school lunches. When students don’t have enough time to eat, these valuable resources are lost. Increased participation in school lunch brings the health and academic benefits of school meals to more students, while drawing additional federal funds in per-meal reimbursements into California.
* **AB 2449 would strengthen the existing CDE recommendation that students have at least 20 minutes to eat lunch after being served**, which is consistent with evidence-based recommendations from numerous nutrition experts, including USDA. The CDE guidelines provide schools with a variety of strategies for providing more time for students to eat at minimal or no-cost to schools. This allows local schools the flexibility to pursue different strategies that best fit each school’s unique characteristics.
* **AB 2449 would establish a reasonable and achievable requirement that schools are able to meet.** While research has shown that many California students are missing out on lunch time, many schools throughout the state are already providing students with adequate time to eat by ensuring that lunch service moves efficiently and school bell schedules are allow sufficient time to serve all students within the lunch period.
* **AB 2449 would bring California up to speed with the nine other states and the District of Columbia that have policies in place requiring adequate time to eat at school.** California currently has no state statute that guarantees an adequate meal break for students; however, state labor law ensures a minimum 30-minute, uninterrupted meal break for employees. California should ensure that its hard-working students are given the time they need to eat during the school day.

 (If you prefer, insert your own reason here) I believe my community could benefit from AB 2449 because…

(Name of your organization) urge(s) the committee to pass AB 2449 and to support this common sense legislation as it continues to move through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

Your name and title

CC: Tracey Patterson, California Food Policy Advocates (sponsor)