

SB 138 (McGuire): Count Me In! Expand Access to School Meals



Opportunity

Across California, more than 1.7 million California households with children struggle to put food on the table. **School meals are extremely effective at fighting the devastating effects of child hunger.** The time is right for California to broaden the reach of schools meals.

By acting now, we can elevate our state's success with Medi-Cal enrollment by directly connecting these low-income children to school meals. This has been successfully piloted in 14 districts, and should be used statewide. **We can double down on our commitment to meet the needs of Californians by maximizing the reach of school meals, and ensuring that the programs are efficient and effective.** School meal programs should be able to focus on what matters most – child health – not burdensome paperwork.

Child Hunger



Legislative Action

SB 138 would more effectively identify low-income students and increase access to school meals:

- ➔ SB 138 would ensure that the Department of Education and school districts identify students eligible for free and reduced-price school meals with verified Medi-Cal income data.
- ➔ SB 138 calls for very high poverty schools to provide optimal access to school meals – and receive maximum federal reimbursements with reduced administrative burden – by utilizing federal universal meal provisions to serve breakfast and lunch free of charge to all students.

Why This Matters



Well-nourished students are better prepared to learn, grow, and achieve at their fullest potential. Unfortunately, on an average school day, millions of California's low-income public school students miss out on the health and academic benefits of school meals. SB 138 helps state leaders to fight child hunger and take steps to fight off possible threats to school meal programs, while directing additional federal funds to serve students in high-poverty schools.

Now, more than ever, school districts need the best available tools to identify disadvantaged students. Students need access to resources that support their health, including school meals.

Schools need support to make sure that their school meal programs serve all students in need and remain fiscally viable. SB 138 presents straightforward solutions to improve student access to school meals and reduce administrative burden for school districts, while maximizing all federal funding available.