

BREAKFAST AFTER THE BELL



CONTACT

Jonathan Bash, Brown•Miller Communications
(800) 710-9333, jonathan@brownmillerpr.com

Tia Shimada, California Food Policy Advocates
(510) 433-1122 x109 (office), (510) 407-2868 (cell)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Legislation Aims to Improve Student Achievement, Health Through Innovative Improvements to School Breakfast

SACRAMENTO, CA, MARCH 3, 2015 ... With a single piece of legislation, state lawmakers took a bold step today to boost academic performance, revitalize California's anemic school breakfast program and more effectively manage existing funding. AB 1240, introduced by Assemblymembers Rob Bonta (D-Oakland) and Tony Thurmond (D-Richmond), calls for practical changes to improve access to the school breakfast program and ensure more students start their school day well nourished and ready to learn.

"Even students with the best teachers and curriculum will struggle to learn if they come to school hungry," said Assemblymember Rob Bonta. "Research has consistently shown that hungry kids can't focus at school, making it difficult for them to be productive and engaged students. By giving students the basic opportunity to nourish themselves and thrive in a positive educational environment, AB 1240 offers a simple solution to help address California's achievement gap."

Three out of every four public school students in California miss out on the health and academic benefits of school breakfast. That's 4.3 million California children, many of whom come to school hungry and distracted. A large body of scientific research demonstrates that students who eat breakfast have improved cognitive function, academic performance, attendance and psychological well-being. They are also less likely to be tardy, absent or to disrupt the classroom.

"Many barriers at home and at school prevent California's children from having breakfast each day," stated George Manalo-LeClair, executive director of California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA), the bill's sponsor. "Working parents are busy, schedules are hectic, transportation is challenging and, as most parents know, many kids aren't ready to eat when they first wake up. These issues are compounded by schools that only serve breakfast before the school day begins, before many kids even get out the front door."

Almost 20 percent of California schools do not offer breakfast, and the majority of schools that do serve breakfast only offer it early in the morning before the school day begins. As a result, the number of children reached by the federal School Breakfast Program (SBP) is half that of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

AB 1240, the *Breakfast After the Bell* bill, aims to maximize access as well as improve the efficiency of the federally funded breakfast program by requiring higher-need schools to implement after-the-bell breakfast models similar to those shown to be effective in innovative districts across the state. After-the-bell options include serving breakfast during an extended passing period, mid-morning break or homeroom, or offering healthy meals on grab-n-go carts. Ultimately, decisions about these specific practices would be left to local school districts and principals.

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The legislation would require schools where 40 to 60 percent of students are in need (i.e., eligible for free or reduced-price school meals) to offer breakfast as an option to all of their students. Schools where 60 to 80 percent of students are in need would be required to offer breakfast after the start of the school day. Schools where at least 80 percent of students are in need would be required to offer breakfast after the start of the school day and free of charge to all students. For these particularly high-need campuses, offering breakfast for free to all students is made fiscally possible by available federal reimbursements.

Increased participation in the SBP resulting from Breakfast After the Bell legislation could bring up to \$344 million federal dollars to the state of California. Those funds would support food and equipment purchases and create local jobs while improving academic outcomes for California's kids.

"As a parent and a former school board member, I know how important a healthy breakfast is to our children's success," stated Assemblymember Tony Thurmond. "This is a win-win opportunity. Not only does it use existing federal funds to make sure our kids start their day with a nutritious breakfast, but it helps our educators foster a better learning environment in which kids are more focused. That's a priority for every parent."

More information about AB 1240 and the links between school breakfast and academic success is available at www.calbreakfast.org.

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EDITORS NOTE: A full online pressroom that includes spokespersons' contact information, press kit materials, fact sheets and photographs is available at: www.calbreakfast.org.

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food.

Funding for the *Breakfast After the Bell* campaign is provided by the No Kid Hungry campaign.