

2012 State Legislative Agenda

Each year CFPA develops a legislative agenda focused on improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. Our 2012 agenda reflects a broad range of strategies focused on schools, child care settings, and homes.

AB 1560 (Fuentes) Food for Health: Aligning Medi-Cal and Nutrition Assistance

In 2014, California will enroll an additional 2 million people in Medi-Cal – a significant step forward in ensuring that all Californians have access to health benefits. With the expansion of health coverage via Medi-Cal, we have an opportunity to connect low-income Californians with other essential benefits that support their health, such as CalFresh and school meals. Families receiving Medi-Cal are likely eligible to receive CalFresh, however, they are often unaware of this additional benefit. Because children that participate in CalFresh are automatically certified to receive school meals, by aligning Medi-Cal and CalFresh eligibility, households could easily access three vital services: health coverage, nutrition assistance, and free school meals.

Action: *Make all Medi-Cal recipients (with income up to 200% FPL) income-eligible for CalFresh; boosting participation, connecting nutrition to health, and drawing down significant federal nutrition benefits into local economies.*

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AB 1594 (Eng) Improving Charter School Nutrition: Hunger Should Not Be a Choice

The number of charter schools across California continues to grow; during the 2010-2011 school year alone, the total number of charter schools in California grew by 100. At a total of 982 schools, California has the highest concentration of charters in any state. This presents a crucial opportunity to ensure that all of the more than 412,000 California students attending California charter schools receive the resources necessary to support their academic success, including, a free or reduced price meal if eligible. Currently, California charter schools are exempt from the state requirement that public schools serve one meal a day to students who qualify for free or reduced price meals.

Action: *Extend the needy-student meal mandate to charter schools, ensuring that all low-income California students, whether attending a traditional public school or charter school, have access to these essential nutrition benefits.*

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AB 1678 (Monning) Building Healthy School Environments: Curb Off-Campus Vending to Kids

California has a history of taking action to create healthier school food environments for our students. In some communities, these efforts are being undermined by mobile food vending that competes with the provision of healthy meals and snacks through the federal nutrition programs. The consumption of unhealthy competitive foods jeopardizes students' diets and can negatively impact their overall well-being. The sale of off-campus competitive foods infringes on the fiscal viability of schools' nutrition programs. Limiting access to off-campus competitive foods helps drive students toward participation in nutritious school meals and snacks. Limiting mobile food vending in close proximity to school campuses is a positive step toward securing healthy school environments and supporting students' academic success through nutrition.

Action: *Restrict food and beverage sales via mobile vending in close proximity to school campuses from specified periods before the school day begins until the conclusion of afterschool activities. This action will support student health and bolster participation in school nutrition programs.*

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AB 1872 (Alejo) Improving Child Care Nutrition: Healthy Eating Starts Early

Nearly one in four Californian children under the age of five is overweight or obese. Encouraging healthy eating among preschool-aged children, as they develop taste preferences and dietary habits, is an essential obesity prevention and health promotion strategy. Licensed child care providers play a key role in ensuring that young children receive quality nutrition. Under existing California law, licensed child care centers are required to comply with the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern - whether the centers are enrolled in the program or not - as a condition of licensure, thus ensuring that children in child care centers are served nutritious meals and snacks. Currently, family day care homes in California are not required to follow the CACFP meal pattern, or any nutrition standards for food, as a condition of licensure. Studies demonstrate that child care facilities enrolled in the CACFP serve nutritionally superior meals compared to meals served at child care sites without CACFP. Unfortunately, roughly half of all licensed child care providers in California do not participate in CACFP.

Action: Amend licensing laws for family day care homes (FDCH) to require them to comply with the CACFP meal pattern, whether they are enrolled in the program or not, as a condition of licensure; and require licensing authorities to inform child care centers and FDCH providers about CACFP, including information about eligibility, enrollment, and reimbursement.

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AB 1781 (Brownley) Boost School Meal Participation: Lining up to Remove Stigma

During mealtime at public schools in California, students face short lunch periods, crowded cafeterias and pressure to impress their peers. Many low-income students face painful stigma and try to avoid participating in the school meal programs, leading them to purchase less nutritious à la carte items, or even going without a meal to avoid the embarrassment of receiving a free meal. In California, over one million low-income students who qualify for a free or reduced price school meal miss out on the benefits of lunch, and well over two million low-income students miss out on the benefits of breakfast. While USDA explicitly prohibits the overt identification of students' eligibility status for free or reduced price meals, it does not protect them from other ways by which they can be identified. The presence of service lines that *do not* serve a reimbursable meal creates an environment in which students could be identified as low-income because they must go to another service line or area to receive the reimbursable meal. In an effort to decrease stigma and support participation in the federal meal programs among free and reduced price eligible students *and* full price eligible students, schools operating a federal meal program must make a reimbursable meal available in all food service lines. A more accessible reimbursable meal will boost meal program participation bringing the benefits of a nutritious meal to more students, and additionally bringing increased federal reimbursement dollars into California.

Action: During mealtime, students shall be able to receive a free or reduced price meal at any service line that school food services operates, manages or from which school food services receives revenue, thereby decreasing stigma and creating an environment in which all students, particularly low-income students, are encourage to participate in school meals.

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