

2015 State Legislative Agenda: Solutions for Health and Learning

For over two decades, California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) has incubated and advanced innovative policy solutions that increase low-income Californians' access to nutritious, affordable food. We envision a healthy and food-secure California for all residents.

Opportunity: School meals are essential resources that can help all children reach their full potential. Extensive research and common sense tell us that children need nutritious meals to learn, grow, and achieve. The national school lunch and school breakfast programs support the health and academic achievement of California's students while drawing billions of federal dollars into the state economy.

2015 Policy Actions:

- Guarantee that California students, particularly those served by high-need schools, have access to school breakfast.
- Ensure that students are given the recommended minimum time to eat lunch.

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AB 1240 (Bonta & Thurmond) Breakfast After the Bell

More than three million students across our state are eligible to receive a free or reduced-price breakfast each school day. Unfortunately, more than 2 million of our most vulnerable students regularly miss out on the health and academic benefits of school breakfast, making it even harder for them to succeed.

The reach of the federal School Breakfast Program falls chronically short, not because funding isn't available, but because breakfast isn't served when kids are able to eat. Most schools that serve breakfast do so only in the early morning before class begins. Students who can't get to school early can't eat. Bus schedules, parents' work schedules, and other pressing factors can make an early arrival to school, as well as an in-home breakfast, a challenge for families. What's more, serving a nutritious breakfast at home may not be an option at all for the many food-insecure households in California that are struggling to meet their most basic needs.

Children deserve access to resources that are essential for health and learning. When schools serve breakfast after the first bell rings, they reach more students in need and make better use of existing federal dollars. For a small State investment of just 22 cents per meal, California can trigger a substantial boost in federal funds.

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AB 292 (Santiago) Time to Eat: Lunchtime Supports Learning

Many students miss out on the health and academic benefits of a nutritious lunch, often because they don't have enough time to eat during the school day. Short lunch periods and long lines can deter students from taking or finishing their meals. This leads to poor nutrition, food waste, and hungry students who are unable to focus on learning.

The California Department of Education recommends that students have at least twenty minutes to eat once they've received a lunch. Research shows that the majority of California schools are not meeting this recommendation. Schools receive state and federal funds for the nutritious lunches they serve to low-income students. Those valuable resources are wasted if students don't have enough time to eat.

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In 2015, the State Legislature should guarantee that California's public school students have real access to nutritious school meals, resources that are essential to health and learning. California should maximize the impact of the state and federal funds that fuel the school meal programs.