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September 12, 2013

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor, State of California
California State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for AB 290 (Alejo) – *Foundations for Healthy Nutrition in Child Care*

Dear Governor Brown:

California Food Policy Advocates respectfully requests your signature on AB 290 (Alejo), legislation designed to improve the health and wellness of California's youngest residents by strengthening child care providers' understanding of childhood nutrition and awareness of available resources.

In California, **one of four** preschool-aged children is overweight or obese and at risk of developing chronic diseases that negatively impact their quality of life (in both the short and long-term) and contribute to escalating health care costs. Conversely, children who practice healthy eating habits during the first five years of life are more likely to extend those healthy habits into adulthood. With more than 45,000 licensed child care facilities in California serving over one-million children, child care providers are uniquely positioned to help ensure young children are exposed to healthful nutrition early in life.

AB 290 advances California's commitment to health by equipping child care providers with the knowledge necessary to serve healthy foods at a lower cost. AB 290:

- ▶ **Educates child care providers about early childhood nutrition.** Research indicates that child care provider training has the greatest impact on the quality of child care programs. Yet California's child care licensing laws do not require providers to undergo any nutrition training. Provider education is a fundamental strategy to improve the nutritional quality of foods served in child care.
- ▶ **Ensures child care providers have full knowledge of available nutrition resources.** The federally-funded Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) offers reimbursement and other nutrition-related resources that result in healthier foods being served to preschoolers and greater economic stability for child care programs. Unfortunately, only about half of all licensed child care providers in California participate in the program. A commonly reported barrier to enrollment is lack of awareness. Child care providers deserve to know about these vital benefits.

To ensure that unintended costs were not created through the implementation of AB 290, amendments were adopted in the Senate. These amendments: (1) extend the bill's effective date by one year to provide sufficient time for the Emergency Medical Services Authority (the department authorized to oversee the Preventive Health and Safety Training) to implement the requirements through existing processes, and (2) allow implementation of the requirements through bulletin or similar instruction from the director in order to alleviate costs associated with the development of regulations.

For the health of our youngest residents, California's leadership should embrace the standards set forth by professional early care and education organizations and emulate the licensing regulations already established in many other states. Health care costs are soaring, childhood obesity rates remain at epidemic proportions, and families continue to struggle to find affordable, quality early care. AB 290, a bi-partisan and unanimously supported effort, aims to prevent the adverse effects of obesity and support families by ensuring that California's licensed child care providers have the necessary knowledge of childhood nutrition and financial supports to serve healthier foods at a lower cost.

As sponsor of AB 290, California Food Policy Advocates is proud to partner with Assembly Member Luis Alejo to improve child care nutrition. AB 290 is a key step toward creating healthy nutrition environments for California's youngest residents. For this reason, we respectfully request your signature on AB 290.

Sincerely,



Elyse Homel Vitale, MPH
Nutrition Policy Advocate
California Food Policy Advocates

Cc: Assembly Member Luis Alejo