

## Support for Early Childhood Education Nutrition Investments

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Dear Governor Brown and Chairpersons Leno and Skinner,

We, the undersigned, are writing in strong support of a state investment in early childhood education (ECE) nutrition. Nutrition reimbursements for ECE programs have the power to boost the nutritional quality of the foods served to California's youngest residents, while simultaneously strengthening the financial viability of California's ECE system.

There is strong scientific evidence that the first five years of life are a critical time for growth and brain development. We know that children who start life with nutritious diets fare better, both physically and academically, and are more likely to thrive later in life. With more than one million children enrolled in California's licensed ECE programs, educators are uniquely positioned to support a young child's nutritional needs. Unfortunately, California has slashed overall funding for ECE by 40% in the past six years and cut nutrition-specific funding by 85% in the past three years. This has left ECE programs without adequate resources to provide nutritious foods, particularly those programs serving our most disadvantaged children.

After a decade of budget crises and dire fiscal conditions for the field of ECE, California has finally turned the page. Policymakers have the opportunity to rebuild our state's ECE system to support the current and long-term health needs of California's children. With this goal in mind, we respectfully request that the Legislature:

- Require the state to reimburse all ECE programs enrolled in the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) \$0.2248 for each free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch served.

By providing nutrition reimbursements for ECE programs at a level equal to that provided for meals served in K-12, California policymakers can support the health of our youngest children and fulfill our state's well-established commitments to increase kindergarten readiness and decrease the achievement gap. California's youngest children need and deserve a healthy, well-nourished start to life.

Please contact Elyse Homel Vitale with California Food Policy Advocates at [elyse@cfpa.net](mailto:elyse@cfpa.net) or 510.433.1122 ext. 206 with any questions regarding our request.

Sincerely,

*[Organization Logos in Alphabetical Order]*