

BUDGET ALERT

To: Conference Committee Conferees, CA State Legislature

Date: June 3, 2014



Restore Funding for Early Childhood Nutrition Budget Item 6110 (K-12 Conference Committee Agenda Page 8)

OPPORTUNITY

Children grow and develop rapidly within the first five years of life. They need nutritious diets to support healthy development. Policymakers currently have an opportunity to fulfill California's commitment to increasing kindergarten readiness and decreasing the achievement gap by investing in early childhood nutrition. Our youngest children deserve a healthy, well-nourished start in life.

REQUEST

Adopt the Assembly's early childhood nutrition budget proposal, which would:

Item 6110-202-0001: Reinstate a \$0.16 per meal reimbursement for providers participating in the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

WHY THIS MATTERS

Ensuring that our youngest children have access to healthy meals throughout their day is critically important. This proposed investment would support the provision of over **73 million nutritious meals each year**, targeting low-income children in high quality child care settings. Investing in early childhood nutrition reaps many benefits:

- Healthy eating habits develop in the first 5 years of life.
- Good nutrition in early childhood is linked to improved cognitive ability.
- Research shows CACFP is associated with better nutrition *and* better overall quality of care.
- CACFP serves the most vulnerable children, with more than 80% of participants qualifying for free or reduced-priced meals.
- A small investment in nutrition has the power to support early childhood educators, families, and young children.
- A state investment in early childhood nutrition increases the effectiveness of the state's existing commitment to K-12 nutrition.
- The proposed investment ensures that all low-income children, whether attending K-12 or an early childhood education program, have equitable access to nutritious meals.
- By encouraging participation in CACFP, a relatively small state investment in early childhood nutrition programs draws down significant federal dollars into local economies.
- Investing in early childhood nutrition is a preventive health strategy that can decrease future spending on diet-related diseases.

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