**ECE Nutrition Investments Sample Support Letter**

**Please submit your support letter ASAP.**

The Assembly and Senate Budget Committees are currently considering their 2014-2015 state budget proposals. These proposals should include an investment in early childhood education (ECE) nutrition that would:

* 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.

This investment is analogous to California’s long-standing, state-funded contribution to K-12 meals, wherein school districts are reimbursed $0.2229 for each breakfast and lunch served.

Organizations, groups, and individuals are urged to personalize this sample letter to explain why investments in ECE nutrition are needed and valuable! Once the Governor releases his May Budget Revise, budget decisions start happening at a rapid pace. ***To ensure that ECE Nutrition Investments remain at the forefront of Capitol budget conversations, please submit your support letters ASAP.***

Fact sheets and other info on the budget proposal can be found at <http://cfpa.net/ECEbudget2014>.

**Fax to Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Chair, Mark Leno at 916.651.4911**

**or email to Samantha Lui at** **samantha.lui@sen.ca.gov**

**AND**

**Fax to Assembly Budget Chair, Nancy Skinner at 916.319.2115**

**or email to Mark Martin at** **mark.martin@asm.ca.gov**

**Please “cc” CFPA by faxing a copy to 510.433.1131**

**or email a copy to** **elyse@cfpa.net**

***Questions?*** Contact Elyse Homel Vitale at 510.433.1122 x206 or elyse@cfpa.net

Date

The Honorable Mark Leno

Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review

State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA  95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner

Chair, Assembly Budget

State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, California 95814

**Re: Support for Early Childhood Education Nutrition Investments**

Dear Chairpersons Leno and Skinner,

(Name of your organization) is 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 foods being served to California’s youngest residents, while simultaneously strengthening ECE programs’ financial viability.

Children grow and develop rapidly within the first five years of life. They need nutritious diets to support a healthy start, both physically and academically. With more than one million children enrolled in California’s licensed ECE programs, educators are uniquely positioned to support a young child’s nutrition 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 early ECE programs without adequate resources to provide nutritious foods, particularly those 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. 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 restoring 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 help fulfill our state’s well-established commitments to increasing kindergarten readiness and decreasing the achievement gap. California’s children need and deserve access to a healthy, well-nourished start in life.

(Personalize this section by sharing your experiences that highlight why this legislation is important to you.)I believe my community would benefit from investments in ECE nutrition because…

*OR*

 (Choose a few of the following reasons for why it is important we invest in ECE nutrition. Share some of your experiences to personalize this letter.) We need to invest in early childhood nutrition because…

* 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.
* 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 investment in K-12 nutrition.
* All low-income children, whether attending K-12 or an early childhood education program, should have equitable access to nutritious meals.
* Investing in early childhood nutrition is a preventive health strategy that can decrease future spending on diet-related diseases.

(Name of your organization) urges your support of reimbursements for ECE nutrition, a key step towards supporting the health and prosperity of California’s children, families, and ECE workforce.

Sincerely,

Your name, title, and organization

cc: Elyse Homel Vitale, California Food Policy Advocates