

The Story: Why We Need AB 1871 (Bonta)



Who Needs AB 1871?



340,000+

charter school students whose families are struggling to make ends meet.

80,000+

of these students who do not have access to free or low-cost school meals.



- 115 students in Alameda County whose charter school offers NO meals. Nearly all of the students (95%) are low income.
- 450+ students in Los Angeles County whose charter school offers NO meals. 80% of the students are low income.
- 800+ students in San Diego County whose charter school offers meals only 2x per week & for a fee. 1 in 3 of the students is low income.



“ Our family made the choice that 2014-15 would be our last year at [the charter school] due to a number of concerns, the lack of a free/reduced meal program being part of that decision. I am sad to hear [the charter school] does not currently provide a free/reduced meal plan to their families. I know there are literally hundreds of families at [the charter school] that would benefit...”

Anonymous parent of former charter school students in CA

More than 340,000 low-income students attend California charter schools. Unlike all other low-income public school students, they are not protected by the state law that guarantees access to at least one nutritious, free or reduced-price school meal each school day.

As a result, more than 80,000 low-income charter school students have no access to free and reduced-price school meals or, in many cases, any school meals at all. These students attend charter schools of all stripes: large and small schools with varying rates of student poverty in rural and urban communities.

AB 1871 (Bonta) would guarantee that all low-income public school students – including charter school students – have equitable access to nutritious school meals.

Currently, charter schools can voluntarily make meals available to students – and many do. But students shouldn’t have to rely on voluntary efforts to protect them from hunger. Granting charter school students the right to school meals is critical to

- ➔ Protect current students and the rapidly growing number of new charter school students from hunger;
- ➔ Ensure that this protection cannot be reneged; and
- ➔ Provide equitable access to a basic resource that supports academic success.

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- 120+ students in Humboldt County whose charter school only offers full-price meals. More than 80% of the students are low income.
- 1,300+ students in Riverside County whose charter school offers NO meals. The majority of the students are low income.
- 330+ students in Sacramento County whose charter school offers NO meals. 1 in 3 of the students is low income.

Charter school students deserve equitable access to school meals.



Note: School meal participation and eligibility information is sourced from a CFPA analysis of data from the California Department of Education and from primary data collection conducted by a CFPA affiliate.

The charter schools that voluntarily offer free and low-cost meals to their students show us that meal programs work in a variety of charter school settings. For example,

- A charter high school in Los Angeles County that enrolls more than 3,000 students contracts with a nearby school district to offer meals. Two in every three students at the school are low income.
- A K-8 charter school in Alameda County that enrolls 170 students contracts with a private company to offer school lunch. More than 1 in 4 of the school's students are low income.
- An independent study charter school (grades 7-12) that enrolls more than 100 students in Stanislaus County offers meals two times per day. Almost 90% of the enrolled students are low income.
- A charter school in Sacramento County that enrolls 200 students serves lunch and breakfast free of charge to all students. One in 10 students at the school is low income.

Like all public schools, charter schools are entitled to state and federal funds for the operation of school meal programs. **But charter schools are the only public schools not required to provide meals to students in need.**

What does this mean for charter schools students?



We need food to function and some families aren't able to afford full-price school meals. Everyone deserves to have equal opportunities and by having free or low-cost meals, everyone does.

Mussa Adam
Charter School Graduate
UC San Diego Youth Advisory Council