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March 28, 2012

The Honorable Wilmer Amina Carter
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0062
Via facsimile 916.319.2162

Re: Support for AB 2555

Dear Assemblymember Carter:

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) writes in strong support of AB 2555 to bolster summer meal programs.

CFPA is a statewide, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians. We work to fulfill our mission by advocating for improvements to the federal nutrition programs, including the summer nutrition programs.

Traditional K-12 public schools are required to offer one nutritionally adequate meal each school day to any needy student in attendance. Schools may submit a one-year waiver request to the State Board of Education in order to be exempt from this requirement during summer sessions.

AB 2555 will change the waiver request deadline from 30 to 60 days before the last regular meeting of the state board that occurs prior to the commencement of the summer session in question. This change will allow the California Department of Education adequate time to (1) assess waiver requests and; (2) provide technical assistance that supports applicants in considering alternatives to eliminating summer meal services.

Year-round access to nutritious, affordable food is critical to the health and academic success of California's children. A growing body of research shows that learning loss and unhealthy weight gain occur more rapidly during the summer than the school year. Ensuring that children receive balanced meals throughout the summer helps prevent these negative effects.

As shown in CFPA's annual report, *School's Out...Who Ate?*, average daily participation in the federally funded summer nutrition programs declined 15 percent from July 2009 to July 2010; nearly 25 percent from July 2008; and a full 50 percent from 2002. Approximately 2.9 million of California's low-income children who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals miss out on affordable, nutritious lunches in the summer months. We must work to close this gap.

While schools and community-based organizations can operate federal summer nutrition programs, the steep decline in summer meal participation has been driven by the decline in meals served by schools. Enacting AB 2555 will allow the California Department of Education adequate time to work with school districts that might otherwise eliminate valuable nutrition resources for children in need.

We thank you for authoring this important measure and enthusiastically offer our support.

Sincerely,



Tia Shimada
Nutrition Policy Advocate
California Food Policy Advocates