

AB2686 Amendments: What Would the New Bill Accomplish?

1. What is the goal of the amended version of AB2686?

AB2686 (as amended) would let parents know about two key school district nutrition policies, so that they have the knowledge they need to work at the local level to improve their district's school lunch program.

2. Why is this bill needed?

Low-income families are eligible for free and reduced-price school lunches. With 8 million Californians touched by hunger, these meals are an essential nutrition resource for families struggling to make ends meet. Given the severity of the obesity epidemic and the importance of starting kids off with healthy diets, these families should have access to nutrition information about the school meals. In addition, a five-year audit by the California Department of Education found that half of the meals reviewed exceeded USDA standards for fat or saturated fat. Focusing on reducing the fat and saturated fat in the entrées would lead more school districts to comply with USDA regulations.

3. How would the bill work?

The Legislature would urge school districts to (1) adopt certain standards for the fat and saturated fat levels for entrées served as part of the National School Lunch Program and (2) provide parents with nutrition information about the school lunch program. School districts would indicate to the Department of Education, as part of an annual form they already fill out to participate in NSLP, whether or not they will implement the guidelines. The Department will post the school districts' responses on its Web site (as a complement to its API data, SMI data and other parent-engagement tools) within a reasonable time period.

4. Then what happens?

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is committed to publishing an annual audit of school district responses. We will analyze the data by county and, when possible, legislative district to determine how many have indicated they will adopt the policies and how many have decided not to. Working with a variety of partners—including parent groups, the dozens of local obesity-prevention groups and others—CFPA will also make sure that school districts that said they would adopt the policies actually are. With this information, we will get the story out to local advocates, legislators and the press. The media attention will both provide positive attention to school districts that are taking these important nutrition steps and public pressure on school districts that are not. CFPA will provide parents with tool kits so that they can respond effectively if their school has opted not to participate—so as to fuel local efforts to promote change.

5. Can't this happen without a bill?

Without the Legislature saying that they believe school districts *should* limit fat and engage parents, parents won't know that these steps are reasonable and worthwhile. Many school districts post their menus online, but few provide nutrition information; likewise, half of audited school districts provided more fat than USDA allows. This bill is needed for change to occur.