

NEW Sample Letter of Support for a State Investment in After-the-Bell School Breakfast

California kids need your help! Budget leaders are making decisions about how our state will fund programs that affect the health and success of California kids. We are calling on state leaders to invest in after-the-bell school breakfast. By increasing access to school breakfast, such an investment would bolster academic achievement and improve overall wellbeing for hundreds of thousands of students across California.

Status:

Next steps: Please submit a letter of support to California’s budget leaders. Let them know that students across our state deserve access to the nutritious meals. Please do submit an updated letter even if you have already expressed your support.

Please email letters to elisa.wynne@sen.ca.gov, christian.griffith@asm.ca.gov & tracey@cfpa.net.

Questions? Please contact Tracey Patterson at 510.433.1122 x101 or tracey@cfpa.net.

[Date]

The Honorable Holly J. Mitchell
Chair, Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
California State Senate
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Budget Committee
California State Assembly
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony J. Portantino
Chair, Budget Subcommittee on Education
California State Senate
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Kevin McCarty
Chair, Budget Subcommittee on Education
California State Assembly
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for a One-Time State Investment in After-the-Bell School Breakfast

Dear Senator Mitchell, Assemblymember Ting, Senator Portantino and Assemblymember McCarty,

[I am/Name of your organization is] writing in support of a state investment in after-the-bell breakfast that would bolster academic achievement, attendance at school, and support overall wellbeing for hundreds of thousands of kids throughout California.

It's not just a cliché: for California students, breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Decades of research show that breakfast plays a critical role in students' academic performance, memory, and cognitive function. Eating breakfast also improves students' physical, mental, and emotional health. School breakfast has been shown to increase attendance at school and decrease tardiness and disruptive behavior, helping to create a classroom environment that is ideal for academic success.

On an average school day, 2 million of California's low-income students, who have a higher risk for food insecurity and are more likely to fall into the achievement gap, aren't reached by the School Breakfast Program. While most California public schools do technically offer breakfast, many only serve it early in the morning before the start of the school day, when many children have yet to arrive.

Parents' work schedules, bus schedules, stigma, and other pressing factors can keep children from eating breakfast before the school day begins. These systemic challenges mean the federal School Breakfast Program (SBP) reaches only half of the students served by the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). As a result, many of California's most vulnerable children don't get what they need each day to learn, grow, and achieve at their fullest potential.

Integrating breakfast into the school day (serving breakfast sometime after the first bell rings), helps to eliminate barriers and dramatically increases student participation in school breakfast. California can increase low-income students' access to nutritious meals by investing in breakfast after the bell.

[I/We] thank...

[I/We] support the investment in school breakfast because [choose one or more of the following reasons or add your own]

- **When students are hungry they can't focus and they struggle to learn.** Research and common sense tell us that well-nourished children are better prepared to achieve academic success. Increasing access to school breakfast will ensure more students are ready to learn each school day.
- **School breakfast supports attendance at school.** Attendance at school is essential for academic success. Yet, hundreds of thousands of California kids are chronically absent. Eating school breakfast has been shown to increase student attendance—supporting student success and bringing in additional district funding.

- **All students deserve to reach their fullest potential.** Children in every corner of California should have access to resources that support learning and health. After-the-bell breakfast will equip more students to do and be their very best.
- **Increasing access to school breakfast is a win for students, schools, and the economy.** A state investment in school breakfast can bring millions in additional federal meal reimbursements to California school districts. These federal dollars will generate new economic activity for local communities and the state at large.
- **We should invest state funds in programs that work.** Integrating breakfast into the school day reaches more students in need, supporting the health and academic achievement of California kids. Increasing student participation in the School Breakfast Program draws more federal dollars into California, generating economic activity and related tax revenues that return to the state coffers. Whether the focus is on children's health, students' academic achievement, or the state's economy, school breakfast works.

[If you prefer, insert your own reason here.]

[I/We] respectfully urge you and your colleagues to include the one-time investment in after-the-bell school breakfast in the 2018-19 budget act.

Sincerely,

[Your name and title]

[Your organization, if applicable]

cc: Tracey Patterson, California Food Policy Advocates