

SB 499

California-Grown for Healthy Kids Act

Senator McGuire

SUMMARY

Students can't learn when they are hungry – yet, according to the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, nearly 2 million California children are food insecure and at-risk for hunger. Nutritious school meals are an essential way to ensure students are getting the food they need to learn and grow. By improving school food access and incentivizing more fresh fruits and vegetables in school meals, SB 499 gives students better access to healthy food, improves their learning, and supports California farmers.

BACKGROUND

Research has consistently shown that breakfast is important for students' health and academic success. Effective school breakfast programs are associated with higher test scores, better grades, and positive learning environments. As interest in the nutritional quality of school meals continues to grow, research shows the invaluable links between healthy food and student academic success. A 2018 study from UC Berkeley showed that healthier meals in California schools improve student achievement and test scores.

School cafeterias provide one of the best opportunities to ensure students have access to healthy, nourishing food. SB 138 (McGuire, 2017) took a much needed step toward addressing child hunger, requiring school districts and county offices of education with very high poverty schools to provide breakfast and lunch free of charge to all their students through the federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

While SB 138 has encouraged many schools to take advantage of universal meals under CEP, childhood food insecurity and diet-related disease for California children remain at critically high levels.

PROBLEM

Unfortunately, a student's access to healthy school meals is not just a matter of food availability. One of the outstanding barriers to students benefitting from school meals is the quality of food. California must better utilize our own resources—including the healthy, fresh produce grown in our state—to support student health and learning.

According to the Farm to School Census, only 55% of California school districts surveyed participate in farm to school activities, such as serving locally produced foods. A 2014 report by the Office of Farm to Fork, under the California Department of Food and Agriculture, names the extra costs that it takes to buy directly from a local farm or purchase local foods as one of the biggest deterrents for school food professionals to purchase locally.

SOLUTION

Incentivizing universally free meal programs at schools, and ensuring that those meals include locally sourced fresh fruits and vegetables, are some of the best ways to eliminate obstacles to healthy school meal programs. California must better utilize our own resources—including the healthy, fresh produce grown in our state—to support student health and learning.

The California-Grown for Healthy Kids Act supports schools to purchase local produce, increases incentives to providing universal school meals, and increases nutritious foods to students receiving school meals.

Specifically, SB 499 provides a 10¢ per breakfast reimbursement for California-grown fresh fruits and vegetables to School Food Authorities (SFAs) that eliminates barriers to nutrition in all schools. And, it promotes purchasing locally by providing school districts with financial resources.

To earn this supplemental, non-competitive funding, SFAs must, at a minimum:

- Serve breakfast universally free in all schools
- Serve breakfast and lunch universally free at very high poverty schools, per SB 138

SB 499 incentivizes districts to maximize their use of CEP funding and utilize proven strategies to provide optimum nutrition, such as student tasting and nutrition education; culturally appropriate foods; serving breakfast after-the-bell; and partnering with local farms and organizations.

CONTACT

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SUPPORT

- A Better Course
- Alameda County Community Food Bank
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- California Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics
- California Association of Food Banks
- California Farm Bureau Federation
- California Federation of Teachers
- California Food and Farming Network
- California Food Policy Advocates
- California School Based Health Alliance
- Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations
- Community Alliance with Family Farmers
- Feeding San Diego
- Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano
- Food for People, the Food Bank for Humboldt County
- Friends of the Earth
- Hunger Action Los Angeles
- Los Angeles Community Action Network
- No Kid Hungry California
- Novato Unified School District Food and Nutritional Services
- San Diego Hunger Coalition
- San Francisco Unified School District
- San Luis Obispo County Food System Coalition
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties
- SPUR
- Western Center on Law and Poverty
- 2 individuals