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March 14, 2013

The Honorable Mark Stone
Chair, Assembly Human Services Committee
State Capitol, Room 124
Sacramento, CA 94249

Re: Support for AB 290 (Alejo)

Dear Chairperson Stone:

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) requests your support of AB 290, legislation designed to improve the health and wellness of California's youngest residents by strengthening child care providers' understanding of childhood nutrition and awareness of nutrition resources. We are pleased to be the sponsor of this legislation, having long worked on policies to improve the health and well-being of Californians through increasing consumption of nutritious foods and beverages.

In California, **one of four** preschool-aged children are overweight or obese and at risk of developing chronic diseases that negatively impact their quality of life (in both the short and long-term) and contribute to escalating health care costs. Conversely, children who practice healthy eating habits during the first five years of life are more likely to extend those healthy habits into adulthood. With more than 45,000 licensed child care facilities in California serving over one-million children, child care providers are uniquely positioned to help ensure young children are exposed to good nutrition during their early years.

In recent years, California lawmakers have taken great strides to improve the nutrition environment in schools and child care. In 2010 CFPA sponsored AB 2084, legislation that set healthy standards on the beverages served in child care – an environment where the importance of nutrition is frequently undervalued. California's children are benefitting from the passage of AB 2084, but, as the statistic above indicates, there is still much work to do to ensure that all children are exposed to and consuming healthy foods. AB 290 provides the necessary foundation for child care providers to create healthy, nutritious environments and prepare young children for the healthy foods they'll encounter in elementary school.

Currently, California's licensing laws do not require child care providers to undergo *any* nutrition training – the most basic strategy for increasing providers' knowledge about the importance of nutrition in early development. AB 290 would amend state licensing laws to

increase the required hours of preventive health practices training for child care providers to include one hour on childhood nutrition. Training content would be based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provide basic information about the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a federally-funded nutrition program that provides reimbursements and other resources to child care providers.

Lack of affordable, quality care is an enormous obstacle for low-income families trying to access the rich benefits of quality early care. Research confirms that provider training has the greatest impact on the quality of child care programs. An introduction to nutrition and the CACFP would prepare child care providers with the educational foundation to serve healthier foods **at a lower cost**.

California should embrace the standards set by professional early care and education organizations and emulate the licensing regulations already established in many other states by prioritizing nutrition in child care. Health care costs are soaring, childhood obesity rates remain at epidemic proportions, and families continue to struggle to find affordable, quality early care. AB 290 aims to prevent the adverse effects of obesity and support all families by educating child care providers about the early development of healthy eating habits and the federal CACFP resources.

We are proud to sponsor AB 290 and urge the Legislature to support healthy nutrition in child care by passing this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Elyse Homel Vitale, MPH
Nutrition Policy Advocate
California Food Policy Advocates