

April 5, 2012

TRANSMITTED BY FACSIMILE: 916-323-8386



The Honorable Mark Leno
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 5100
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

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Dear Senator Leno,

California Food Policy Advocates has grave concerns regarding the Governor's proposed \$10.4 million cut to state reimbursements for child care facilities that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP.) The prolonged economic downturn has greatly impacted the economic security of families with children. Recent data confirms that, increasingly, California children are living in poverty. Nearly one in four children (22%) lives below the federal poverty level, whereas in 2007 the rate was 17%. By providing a safe and affordable haven for low-income children, subsidized care – particularly during economic crises – is key to parents and guardians' capacity to seek and retain employment. Assuring that child care providers can afford to serve nutritious foods is critical to quality care.

Child care has already taken its share of cuts. From fiscal year 2010 to 2012, Stage 1 CalWORKS was cut by \$215 million each year. The Governor's newly proposed budget cuts of \$343.3 million would result in an additional 60,000 children losing access to child care in 2013. Such a cut would drop funding to below the 1997/98 level, after adjusting for inflation – the death knell for many programs providing vital services to the state's youngest residents.

The state funding for CACFP programs has been in place since 1975 and helps support the serving of nutritious meals and snacks to low-income children in child care. In California, over 25,000 child care facilities participate in CACFP, translating to nearly 440,000 children served. Of these child care facilities participating in CACFP, approximately 90% participate in non-Prop 98 agencies.

If the Governor's proposed CACFP cuts are approved, many CACFP programs would have to close or cut back – a devastating loss given the myriad of benefits CACFP provides. Research has shown that child care sites participating in CACFP serve more healthful foods and beverages than non-CACFP sites and generally have better physical activity environments, important factors for curbing the state's childhood obesity epidemic. Moreover, the reimbursements associated with CACFP participation contribute to the nutritional and economic safety net for low-income children and their families, help child care providers offer healthier, more nutritious meals and snacks, and serve as valuable contributors to the local economy.

The proposed supplemental nutrition cuts, in addition to the proposed broad reductions to child care funding, would severely impact the availability of quality child care in California for low-income families. We urge rejection of the Governor's proposal to cut the supplemental reimbursement for non-Prop 98 child care facilities. The health, nutrition and well-being of California's young children are too precious to sacrifice. ***Cuts to child care should be off the table in this year's budget discussions.***

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Elyse H. Vitale".

Elyse Homel Vitale,
Nutrition Policy Advocate

CC: Child Care Food Program Roundtable