

## Opportunity

Children grow and develop rapidly within the first five years of life. They need nutritious diets to support a healthy start.

Policymakers can help fulfill California's commitment to increasing kindergarten readiness and decreasing the achievement gap by investing in early childhood nutrition. California has the opportunity to ensure that our youngest children have access to a healthy, well-nourished start in life.

## Action

CFPA requests the Legislature take the following action:

- ➔ Require the state to reimburse all ECE programs enrolled in the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) \$0.2248 for each free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch served.

This proposal is analogous to California's long-standing, state-funded contributions to K-12 meals, where school districts are also reimbursed \$0.2248 for each breakfast and lunch served.

## Why This Matters

We need to invest in early childhood nutrition because:

- ➔ Healthy eating habits develop in the first 5 years of life.
- ➔ Good nutrition in early childhood is linked to improved cognitive ability.
- ➔ Research shows CACFP is associated with better nutrition *and* better overall quality of care.
- ➔ A small investment in nutrition has the power to support early childhood educators, families, and young kids.
- ➔ A state investment in early childhood nutrition increases the effectiveness of the state's existing investment in K-12 nutrition.
- ➔ All low-income children, whether attending K-12 or an early childhood education program, should have equitable access to nutritious meals.
- ➔ By encouraging participation in CACFP, a relatively small state investment in early childhood nutrition programs draws down significant federal dollars into local economies.
- ➔ Investing in early childhood nutrition is a preventive health strategy that can decrease future spending on diet-related diseases.

### Building Blocks of Early Childhood Nutrition Investments

A **small** investment can make a **BIG** difference.



CACFP ensures that state dollars support the **best nutrition**.



Every penny counts towards the **financial stability** of our early childhood educators.

Healthy food means **healthy minds**, preparing our youngest for kindergarten.

Healthy meals in early care support families in stretching their **household food budgets**.



*For more than 20 years, CFPA has been the state's trusted food policy advocacy organization dedicated to increasing low-income Californians' access to healthy food at home, at school, and throughout entire communities. CFPA's advocacy agenda draws on the anti-hunger, nutrition, and health movements. Working as both a policy leader and supportive policy ally, CFPA continues to build on its long history of success.*