

Food with Care – Talking Points

KEY MESSAGES:

Emphasize the impact on Children:

- Young children need food to grow, to develop, and to be healthy, but one in eight low-income families in California does not have access to enough food.
- We want all children in our great state to benefit from good nutrition, but children from communities with the greatest need are losing access to healthy meals in child care.
- California can help restore access and bring a healthy breakfast and lunch to over 200,000 children by supplementing the cost of serving healthy meals in child care.

Touch on the impact on child care providers:

- Child care providers want to do what is best for the children in their care, so when they don't have adequate funding for food they pull from other parts of their already limited budgets to put food on the table.
- Not adequately funding food in child care harms our efforts to increase provider rates and adequately fund child care as a whole.
- Child care providers need state funding in order to provide quality care and healthy meals to low-income children.

BACKGROUND:

- The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) offers financial support to family child care providers and child care centers for serving healthy meals to low-income children in child care.
 - For over 35 years, California supplemented the federal reimbursement for serving healthy meals to low-income children in child care through CACFP.
- In 2012, following the recession, the supplemental state funding for CACFP was cut and thousands of children lost access to healthy meals through the program.
 - California has some of the country's highest costs of living, yet today the federal assistance offered by CACFP is the same for California as it is for all other (less expensive) states. This makes California's supplement a crucial part of the program.
- California has the opportunity to help restore access to healthy meals in child care for thousands of children, while also supporting the financial viability of the child care workforce by fully restoring the state supplemental meal reimbursement for CACFP.

THE NUMBERS AND IMPACT:

- By allocating \$16.7 million for serving healthy meals in child care in the 2018-2019 budget, California can provide 72 million meals annually to over 200,000 children.
 - That number includes over 30 million breakfasts and over 41 million lunches.

- Half of the state's child care providers and one third of child care centers would benefit from the funding.
- After the state cut funding for CACFP, 85% of child care centers and family child care homes that served healthy meals to children through CACFP lost state funding - even though virtually all of the children they serve live in poverty.
 - Hundreds of family child care providers dropped off the program, because they could not afford to participate.
 - Child care centers reported losing on average over \$8,000 from their budgets.

WHY?

- 98 percent of the children who would benefit from an investment in child care meals come from low-income homes and are at higher risk of going hungry.
 - Many California parents struggle to afford basic needs, including food, and paying for child care can be financially crippling.
 - Children from households lacking adequate access to healthy food on average get sick more often, recover from illness more slowly, have poorer overall health, and are more likely to be hospitalized compared to their healthier peers.
 - Good nutrition is vital for young children's development. Children who start life with nutritious diets are more likely to thrive in school and later in life.
- Child care providers want to help by providing the children they care for with healthy meals, but high costs make it difficult for them to meet the nutritional needs of young children.
- Subsidizing meals for eligible children through CACFP will likely result in improved overall diet quality, help children achieve a healthy body weight, and reduce their risk of developing poor health conditions.