

Floor Alert

To: Members, California State Assembly
From: Alexis Fernández, California Food Policy Advocates
Date: May 26, 2012
Subject: **Support AB 1594 (Eng) – Improving Charter School Nutrition**



Problem

Despite their status as public education institutions, charter schools are exempt from California's requirement to "provide for each needy pupil, one nutritionally adequate, free or reduced-price meal during each school day" (Education Code §49550). As the number of charter schools continues to grow across California, so does the number of low-income charter school students who may not have access to the affordable meals that are available at traditional public schools.

What would AB 1594 do?

- **AB 1594 would extend the needy student meal mandate to California charter schools** ensuring that all low-income students attending a public school, whether a traditional public school or a charter school, are provided at least one nutritionally adequate, free or reduced-price meal during each school day.
- **AB 1594 would exempt non-classroom-based and online charter schools.**
- **AB 1594 would stagger implementation** among charter schools that do not currently offer free or reduced-price meals in order to alleviate costs and ease state and local administrative responsibilities during initial implementation of the requirement.
- **AB 1594 would offer charter schools a time-limited hardship waiver** if implementation of the requirement proves to be an unmanageable financial hardship.

Why Support AB 1594?

- **AB 1594 is a fiscally responsible bill that can bring federal resources to California schools.** AB 1594 would encourage student participation in the federally funded nutrition programs by giving charter schools the option to fulfill the meal requirement via operation of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School Breakfast Program (SBP). If a charter school fulfills the requirement via operation of NSLP and/or SBP they will receive the same reimbursement for meals served as all traditional public schools and non-profit private schools; increasing the flow of federal funds into California.
- **AB 1594 promotes equitable access to essential resources.** Millions of California students rely on free and reduced-price school meals to mitigate hunger, support health, and foster academic achievement. Families should not have to leave such valuable resources behind when making the decision to attend a charter school.
- **AB 1594 expands California's commitment to improving school nutrition.** In conjunction with recent state and local efforts to improve school nutrition environments, AB 1594 would increase student access to affordable, nutritionally balanced meals. Research shows that school meals help support *all* students, whether attending a traditional public school or charter schools, as they learn, grow and achieve.
- **AB 1594 upholds California as a national leader in school nutrition.** AB 1594 would add to the growing list of innovative school nutrition practices that have launched in our state and set national standards for supporting overall student well-being and academic achievement.

Research shows that school meals matter. School nutrition programs help ensure that students receive the healthy meals they need in order to learn, grow, and achieve. No low-income student, whether attending a traditional public school or a charter school, should be without access to these essential nutrition resources.

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