

## AB 2449 (Bocanegra) Adequate Time to Eat: Lunchtime Supports Learning

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### Opportunity

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School lunch is a critical resource that helps students learn, grow and achieve. Over 6 million California students can benefit from the school lunch program. For many students, school lunch may be the most nutritious meal of the day. However, millions of students miss out on the benefits of school lunch every day, often because they don't have enough time to eat. Time pressures at lunch can result in food waste and poor nutrition. Many factors impact students' time to eat:

- Busy lunch periods with too many students to serve in the allotted time
- Long lines from insufficient points of service for school meals
- Scheduling recess after lunch causing young students to rush through their meal to play
- School activities that conflict with lunch, such as disciplinary action, club meetings, etc.

California has the opportunity to more effectively spend critical state and federal resources that support school lunches by ensuring students have adequate time to eat.

### Action

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- ✓ CFPA requests that the legislature amend the State Meal Mandate to ensure that students are given adequate time to eat their lunch after being served.

### Why This Matters

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The School Lunch Program is an essential component of the school day. Lunch periods provide a much-needed break for students to rest and refuel their bodies. California's implementation of the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act has improved the foods served in schools, and districts are working hard to make school lunches more healthful and appealing to students. These efforts are hindered when students don't have enough time to get their food and eat during their lunch period!

The California Department of Education recommends that students have 20 minutes to eat after receiving their lunch, but many schools have not met that recommendation. While state labor law ensures workers an adequate meal break during the workday, students have no similar protection.

#### California Students

- Mandated by law to attend school from age 6-18
- No required lunch break or meal time regulations

#### California Workers

- Voluntary employment
- Law provides a minimum 30-minute, uninterrupted meal break for 5 hour + shifts

Research has shown that California students are missing out on the benefits of lunch due to time pressures. Schools have a responsibility to meet students' basic needs during the school day.

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*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.*