



COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS  
*making a difference together*



May 5, 2019

The Honorable Holly J. Mitchell  
Chair, Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
California State Senate  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting  
Chair, Budget Committee  
California State Assembly  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Richard D. Roth  
Chair, Budget Subcommittee on Education  
California State Senate  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Kevin McCarty  
Chair, Budget Subcommittee on Education  
California State Assembly  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Investment for California-Grown for Healthy Kids in the 2019-20 Budget Act**

Dear Senator Mitchell, Assemblymember Ting, Senator Roth, and Assemblymember McCarty,

Students can't learn when they are hungry – yet more than 2 million California in low-income households are affected by food insecurity.<sup>1</sup> California's cost of living strains household budgets and leaves working poor families struggling to afford school meals without incurring meal debt. Federally-funded, universally-free school meals are critical in providing California students with the food needed to learn and grow, and a major support for families struggling to make ends meet.

Unfortunately, a student's access to healthy school meals is not just a matter of food availability. There are two remaining barriers to students benefitting from school meals – stigma and the quality of food. An equity-based framework that increases access to nutritious food is needed to address the health and academic disparities that limit opportunity for millions of California students.

**We, the undersigned, therefore respectfully request an augmentation of \$15.3 million in Proposition 98 child nutrition funding for the *California-Grown for Healthy Kids Program* to increase the provision of fresh, California-grown fruits and vegetables in school districts that provide universally-free meals.**

The *California-Grown for Healthy Kids Program* will help children, school districts, and farmers:

**For Students:** Food is fundamental. California can build upon our strengths – including the healthy, fresh produce grown right here in our state – to support student health and learning. Many of the students hardest hit by our academic opportunity gap are struggling with economic instability and food insecurity at home, due to generations of systemic inequities in economic opportunity and mobility. Every teacher understands that before they can effectively teach, they must address pressing basic

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<sup>1</sup> Data for this factsheet was drawn from the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). 2015-16 Adult, Adolescent, and Child Public Use File. California Health Interview Survey. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. More information about CHIS is available at <http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/chis/Pages/default.aspx>.

needs like hunger. Too many California students miss out on the benefits of school meals. We can close this gap by (1) eliminating the stigma and financial barriers associated with school meals by making them universally free, and (2) serving fresh, appealing, nourishing meals that students want to eat.

**For Schools:** Rising labor costs and a federal poverty measure for school meal eligibility that is out of line with California's cost of living adds cost pressures to schools; federal reimbursements have not been adjusted to meet these needs. While the federal Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act improved nutrition standards for children, schools often struggle fiscally to meet these requirements. A corresponding increase of federal funding was not included when the federal nutrition standards changed to require one cup of fruit or vegetables to be served at school breakfast. This program will provide targeted state support so that schools can effectively meet the unfunded federal mandate to serve fruit with breakfast.

**For Farmers:** California is the largest producer of fresh fruits and vegetables in the nation. "California-Grown" highlights the importance of seeking out and purchasing agricultural products grown and produced in our state. Fiscal incentives for schools to purchase fresh, California-grown produce to nourish our students is mutually beneficial to California school districts, farms, and children.

We respectfully ask the Legislature and Administration to prioritize the needs of students and ensure the promise of education is met. The Budget Committee can take a forward-thinking approach to put California in a stronger position that ensures our state's nutrition assistance efforts are well-equipped to fight hunger and reduce poverty in our state by maximizing our own economy and resources.

Sincerely,

Alameda County Community Food Bank  
CA4Health  
California Association of Food Banks  
California Farm Bureau Federation  
California Farmers Union  
California Food and Farming Network  
California Food Policy Advocates  
Community Alliance with Family Farmers  
Community Health Improvement Partners  
Ecology Center  
Feeding San Diego  
Food for People, Inc.  
Friends of the Earth  
Los Angeles Community Action Network  
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Options for Learning  
Redwood Empire Food Bank  
Robla School District  
Roots of Change

San Diego Hunger Advocacy Network  
San Diego Hunger Coalition  
San Francisco-Marin Food Bank  
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties  
Second Harvest of Santa Clara & San Mateo Counties  
Sierra Harvest  
SPUR

CC: Megan Baier, Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins  
Misty Feusahrens, Speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon  
Jeff Bell, Department of Finance  
Alejandro Espinoza, Department of Education  
Jenny Johnson, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom