

## **Floor Alert**

To: Members, California State Assembly  
From: Tia Shimada, California Food Policy Advocates  
Date: May 31, 2011



**Subject: Support AB 839 (Brownley) – Putting Breakfast First**

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**Problem:** 2.3 million of California's low-income, public school students miss out on the significant health and academic benefits of school breakfast. This harms students and schools at large. Last year alone, California's public schools missed out on \$350 million in federal meal reimbursements due to low breakfast participation.

### **What does AB 839 do?**

- ▶ **Increases attention to the School Breakfast Program and the needs of low-income students.** AB 839 would include public, data-driven discussions about school breakfast in the school board approval process for the Consolidated Application. This would provide an excellent opportunity for school boards and the community to consider the fiscal, health, and academic benefits of the federal School Breakfast Program.
- ▶ **Creates a new forum to discuss practices that increase school breakfast access and participation.** AB 839 would present an opportunity for entire school communities to discuss strategies that are known to improve school breakfast participation, like Classroom Breakfast, Second Chance Breakfast, and Grab n' Go.
- ▶ **Requires school boards to consider changes in order to improve school breakfast access and participation.** Following public discussions about school breakfast, AB 839 requires school boards to make a choice: 1) plan to implement new breakfast practices or 2) maintain the status quo. Requiring school boards to make this decision increases the likelihood of school districts taking action to improve school breakfast.
- ▶ **Provides a process of accountability to help ensure that school breakfast receives the consideration it deserves.** AB 839 enables school districts to share their decisions about school breakfast and related information with the California Department of Education via the Consolidated Application.

### **Why Support AB 839?**

- ▶ **AB 839 helps connect systems that support low-income students.**
  - ▶ The Consolidated Application allows school districts to access categorical funds intended to provide low-income students with equal opportunities to reach their full potential.
  - ▶ The School breakfast Program is designed to meet the nutritional needs of all students, particularly low-income students who may not otherwise have access to a healthy breakfast.
  - ▶ Linking these two systems will help provide comprehensive support to students in need.
- ▶ **AB 839 is a fiscally responsible bill that builds on three existing procedures:** 1) regularly scheduled public school board meetings; 2) schools' current collection of student income and meal participation data; and 3) the Consolidated Application process.
- ▶ **AB 839 can help bring federal resources to California's public schools.** AB 839 asks schools to consider changes known to increase school breakfast participation, including changes in service time and service location. By allowing schools to reach more students in need, such changes also enable school to drawn down additional federal meal reimbursements.

*As families struggle to meet their basic needs and schools face limited resources for public education, California cannot afford to forego federal funds that would help ensure all students are well nourished and ready to learn.*