

2014 State Legislative Agenda

For over two decades, California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) has incubated and advanced innovative policy solutions that increase low-income Californians' access to nutritious food. We envision a healthy and food-secure California for all residents. We are calling on the Governor and the 2014 State Legislature to take action in support of this vision.

2014 Policy Actions:

- ➔ Ensure students are given adequate time to eat lunch.
- ➔ Provide early childhood education facilities with per-meal reimbursements for CACFP.
- ➔ Establish CalFresh customer service standards and performance goals, making county-level indicators regularly and readily available to the public.
- ➔ Ensure that the Local Control Funding Formula does not impede access to school meals.

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Lunchtime Supports Learning: Give Students Adequate Time to Eat

Issue: School lunches are a critical resource, providing essential nutrients that students need to learn, grow, and achieve. Each day millions of students miss out on the health and academic benefits of school lunch, often because they don't have enough time to eat. A number of factors, like short lunch periods and long lines, can deter students from taking or finishing their meals. This leads to poor nutrition, food waste, and hungry students who are unable to focus on learning.

The California Department of Education recommends that schools give students at least twenty minutes to eat once they've received a lunch. Many schools across the state are not meeting that recommendation. Schools receive state and federal funds for the nutritious lunches they serve to low-income students. Those resources are wasted if students don't have enough time to eat.

CFPA Priority: The federal Child Nutrition Programs are an essential component of the school day.

Policy Action: Amend California's school meal mandate to ensure that students are given adequate time to eat lunch.

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Early Childhood Education: Nutrition Investments

Issue: Children grow and develop rapidly within the first five years of life. They need nutritious diets to support a healthy start. Having access to healthy foods early in life also helps children develop long-term, healthy eating habits. However, serving nutritious foods is a heavy and all-too-often unmanageable financial burden for many early childhood educators, particularly those serving our most disadvantaged kids.

State budget conditions are improving – and it's time for policymakers to acknowledge the value of investing in early childhood nutrition. A small, state-funded contribution to each nutritious meal served in early childhood education settings (similar to the State's investment in school meals) can bolster the financial stability of early childhood educators, improve the overall quality of care, support crucial brain development, and prepare our youngest children for success in kindergarten.

CFPA Priority: Build strong strategic alliances with child nutrition stakeholders to increase program participation and optimize the benefits of program participation.

Policy Action: Allocate funding to small, but much-needed, per-meal reimbursements for early childhood education facilities participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

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CalFresh Customer Service Standards and Performance Goals

Issue: In recent years, California has taken great strides toward improving CalFresh access and participation. Many changes to CalFresh were meant to enhance the client experience and efficiently meet increasing demand for benefits. Some CalFresh improvements have created statewide change – and some have been adopted by select counties. California has an opportunity to do even more by ensuring that program improvements impact clients statewide, regardless of county of residence.

To this end, California should (1) identify customer service standards and performance goals for CalFresh; (2) monitor progress in meeting those standards and goals; and (3) regularly make related data publicly available so stakeholders can better identify opportunities for program improvement.

CFPA Priorities: CalFresh enrollment and participation are straightforward, consistent processes for individuals and families across the state. CalFresh policy decisions, particularly at the state level, are data driven.

Policy Action: Establish, through a collaborative process, CalFresh customer service standards and performance goals. Make county-level indicators of CalFresh customer service and performance readily and regularly available to the public.

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LCFF & School Meals: Protecting Resources for Low-Income Students

Issue: For years, local, state, and federal leaders have worked to strengthen the school meal programs, ensuring that low-income students have optimal access to critical nutrition resources. Provision 2 (P2) is a federally authorized option that streamlines student enrollment in free and reduced-price school meal programs and simplifies meal service. This option helps relieve the application burden on families, reduce the administrative burden on schools, and typically increases school meal participation. The Community Eligibility Option (CEO) is another means of meeting those same ends that will soon be available to schools in California.

The state's new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) is designed to direct education resources where they are most needed, particularly with respect to serving low-income students, foster children, and English language learners. We support the LCFF vision of increasing resources for high-poverty schools and we want to be sure that the formula does not impede low-income students' access to free school meals. By requiring districts to provide annual, non-aggregated data on students' household incomes, LCFF undermines the use of P2 and CEO.

More specifically, P2 relies on a multi-year cycle to collect student income data and CEO relies on paperless income/eligibility determinations. P2 income data are already accepted for the distribution of billions of federal dollars through school meal reimbursements and other education expenditures like Title I. Using P2 or CEO to improve access to school meals and simplify program administration should not make it harder for high-poverty schools to receive LCFF funds. In the effort to direct education funding where it is most needed, LCFF should not undermine models like P2 and CEO that successfully connect low-income students to essential resources.

CFPA Priority: The federal Child Nutrition Programs are an essential component of the school day.

Policy Action: Ensure that LCFF does not undermine the use of Provision 2 or CEO to increase low-income students' access to school meals.

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More information about CFPA's program priorities can be found in our 2013-2016 Strategic Plan. [link](#)

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.