

AB 842 (Limón)

Hunger-Free Preschool and Child Care



The Opportunity

Wherever a child attends school, they need access to the basic resources that support their success, including nutritious meals. Recognizing this, California passed a law in 1975 to protect children from hunger by guaranteeing all eligible, low-income K-12th grade public school students access to at least one free or low-cost meal each school day. That same year, the legislature also established state supplemental meal funding to help public schools meet this requirement. **Today, low-income children attending public school who haven't yet reached kindergarten remain the only public school students not guaranteed access to a nutritious, affordable meal under the law.**

The Ask

Guarantee access to a nutritious, free or low-cost meal each day for our youngest public school students:

Provide all low-income children attending preschool or child care at a school district, charter school, county office of education, or state preschool the same protection against hunger as K-12th grade students.

Why Now

Young children need food to grow, to develop, and to be healthy, but over 16% of households with children in California have trouble putting food on the table. As the state works towards universal access to preschool and expanded access to child care, we need to make sure the basic needs of low-income families are front and center: whether in high school or preschool, low-income children need access to healthy meals. Although the majority of public schools and state preschool programs are serving meals to all low-income children, there are, unfortunately, too many examples of those that do not. The state can help build the capacity of our early care and education system to prevent hunger, break the cycle of poverty, and help close the achievement gap by supporting policies and investments that increase access to healthy meals for our youngest learners.

#HungerFreePreschool #HungerFreeEarlyCare

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