

Fund Food With Care

No child should go without a meal, no matter where they go to school or what grade they are in.



Their parents are working, going to school, and getting subsidized care... they need an additional meal. But how are we going to have the funding to do that?

Nadia, Child Care Resource Center in San Fernando Valley

The Opportunity

Eight years ago, preschool and child care providers lost access to the funding necessary to put food on the table for our youngest students. For over 35 years, California supplemented the federal reimbursement for serving low-income children meals in preschool and child care. Then, in 2012, as the state was facing budget shortfalls, this crucial funding was eliminated. As a result, hundreds of family child care providers were forced to stop serving meals, because they simply could not afford it. Many others cut into their already limited budgets to try and make up the difference.

The cost of producing meals exceeds the average federal per-meal reimbursement for a free lunch. For K-12 schools, California helps pick up the difference, but doesn't extend the same support to the preschool and child care providers who are caring for our youngest students. Child care providers want to help the children they care for, but the reality is that family child care providers are often low-income themselves. Nearly half of all child care workers are in families that rely on at least one public-assistance program such as Medicaid or food stamps. We can't keep neglecting child care nutrition as a "nice to have extra" in the state budget. When we don't fund food, we undermine our own efforts to improve the quality of child care.

The Ask



Allocate \$18 million to serve preschool and child care meals to low-income children in the 2020-2021 state budget. Doing so will support the financial viability of our preschool and child care system and provide 70 million meals to California kids.