



May 13, 2021

The Honorable John Laird
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #1 (Education)
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 2054 Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #3 (Health and Human Services)
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 2054 Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Public Comment to Senate Budget Subcommittee #1 and Subcommittee #3 Joint Hearing

Dear Chairpersons:

On behalf of Nourish California, please accept these written public comments in regard to today's joint hearing on child care issues. We thank you and the Committee members and staff for convening administrators to testify about the state of our child care system. As an organization that works to ensure all Californians have the food they need to thrive, we are deeply concerned about the alarmingly high rates of food insecurity throughout our state, including among the child care workforce. Hunger and hardship have worsened due to the COVID-19 crisis, and stark inequities persist for families with young children, particularly Black and Latinx households. We write to share our recommendations for strengthening child care programs so our youngest learners have the food they need and fiscally strained providers can make ends meet.

California's child care providers have stepped up to the challenge of providing early learning and care to support California's families during this unprecedented crisis, but state and federal support are falling short. Child care providers — a predominately low



wage and essential workforce — do not have enough funding to pay for food. Even before the pandemic, most of the state’s child care programs faced the challenge of operating on razor-thin margins and utilized public income support at high rates. In California, 15 percent of child care workers must turn to CalFresh to try to make ends meet. The problem is even more acute for Black and Latinx child care workers who are [disproportionately more likely to participate](#).. The pandemic has exacerbated these existing problems. Child care providers are still trying to make up the difference for income lost during statewide shutdowns and the reopening process has created additional financial strain. Compounding all of this, the price of food has gone up more this year than in any year since 2011. A [recent survey we conducted](#) revealed that **nearly three in four providers worried about running out of food in the last year and more than 50 percent actually did**. We also continue to hear reports of child care providers relying on emergency food assistance to get by. According to our survey, **16 percent of providers relied on free groceries from organizations such as churches and food banks in order to provide meals and/or snacks this year**. It’s shameful that California’s child care workers often have to go to a food bank to feed their own children and unacceptable that our state subsidized child care providers are not paid enough to make ends meet.

State leaders must make critical investments to support child care meal service as part of COVID-19 relief and ensure that child care providers have the resources they need for the future. We support the Early Learning and Care package of proposed investments which will help providers weather this crisis. We also ask the subcommittee to **provide dedicated one-time funding to support child care meal service during the pandemic and look to long term solutions to scale up access to nutritious meals**. The legislature led the way by providing extra support for school meal service during the pandemic (75 cents per meal), but no state meal subsidies are available to child care programs who serve our youngest learners, and during the pandemic are also serving school-aged kids. California has also long supplemented the cost of serving school meals, but neglects to provide similar dedicated support for our child care programs to help put food on the table. Funding child care meal service is a preventative measure to ensure that children’s



most basic needs are met and to support the stability of our child care system. State leaders must step in to provide financial relief. Without support, our child care nutrition infrastructure is at the risk of collapse.

Thank you again for highlighting the need for a strong, well-funded child care system at today's hearing, and for your consideration of our recommendations. Please feel free to contact me at jared@nourishca.org should you have any questions, or wish to discuss our recommendations.

Sincerely,

Jared Call
Senior Advocate
Nourish California

cc: Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee #1 (Education)
Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee #3 (Health and Human Services)