

We applaud the Administration's recent funding in the May Revision embracing the concept of universal school meals, as well as proposing strong investments in our school kitchens and workforce, and our state's farm-to-school program. Specifically, we support the \$150 million ongoing Proposition 98 General Fund dollars to encourage local educational agencies to participate in one of the federal universal meal provisions. This will help to expand access to subsidized school meals and help our state transition to universal meals. The May Revision also

invests in our school nutrition professionals with \$100 million in one-time Proposition 98 General Fund that will provide school kitchen infrastructure upgrades and training for staff. ***These proposed investments, however, still fall short of achieving School Meals for All as the permanent policy in California.***¹

We, the undersigned 207 organizations, continue our support of the 2021 Budget Act providing urgent funding to support several policies to reduce child hunger, improve nutrition and educational outcomes, and maximize federal resources available through the Child Nutrition programs. ***We thank the Legislature for advancing aligning packages of investments to achieve School Meals for All.***

We urge support by all stakeholders for these actions to provide full funding for the implementation of School Meals for All in California. These transformative changes will advance us toward a hunger-free future for our children, provide fundamental support for our essential school nutrition workforce, and bolster our critical agricultural sector.

Specifically, we ask that the 2021 Budget Act include the following provisions:

1. Establish a mechanism to provide free school meals for all California K-12 students. Specifically, to adopt the Senate's proposal to increase state meal reimbursement by \$54 million in the 2021-22 fiscal year and provide \$650 million in ongoing Proposition 98 funding beginning in 2022-23, to cover the costs of offering free breakfast and lunch for all students. LEAs will be required to participate in the National School Meals Programs commencing in 2022-23 and offer breakfast and lunch to all students.
2. Approve the May Revision proposal with amendments to increase funding to \$200 million and define "healthier" and "nutritious." The May Revision proposal would appropriate \$100 million one-time Proposition 98 General Fund to provide training for school food service workers to promote healthier and more nutritious meals, and grants for kitchen infrastructure upgrades and improvements to increase access to fresh, high quality school meals.
3. Approve the May Revision proposal to increase Item 6100-201-0890 by \$257,337,000 one-time Federal Trust Fund and includes provisional language for payments to child nutrition program operators. Pursuant to Section 722 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, this program provides reimbursement to school food authorities and other program operators for declining program revenue resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Approve the May Revision proposal to Fund the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Farm to School Initiative at \$30 million.

Although California produces nearly half of our country's fruits and vegetables, our kids are going hungry at alarming rates. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, over two million California children were experiencing food insecurity and struggling to receive adequate nutrition. Now, as

¹ Center for Ecoliteracy. <https://www.californiafoodforcaliforniakids.org/governor%E2%80%99s-may-revise-budget-could-leave-out-half-california-schools>.

schools are closed and families struggle to pay bills, food insecurity in California has skyrocketed to levels never before seen. The hunger crisis is hitting communities of color the hardest, with Black and Latinx families with children reporting food insecurity twice that of white households. While the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has taken steps to allow the continued service of free school meals, this de-facto free meal service is set to expire at the end of the 2021-22 school year, taking away a critical nutritional resource from children and families as they continue to experience economic hardship.

Schools and essential nutrition service workers have proven themselves to be trusted community lifelines for students and families. The budget requests we are asking for will allow our schools to serve free meals to all students as the negative economic stresses of the pandemic continue to impact California families in the years to come.

Aside from the immediate need to reduce child hunger, a body of evidence shows that receiving proper nutrition benefits child development, behavior, ability to learn, and the creation of lifelong healthy habits. California's roughly 6.2 million K-12 students are in the midst of obtaining an education that will have monumental impacts on the rest of their lives. If funded, these budget requests will ensure that each one of them has the nutrition they need to learn and thrive — a great equalizer for all students regardless of family income.

Moreover, our schools purchasing more school food from local farmers, via increased farm to school program funding, will bolster the state's economy and support the resiliency of our California farmers. Providing grant funding is critical to support our school nutrition service workers to procure, prepare, and serve fresh, healthy California-grown foods to our children. Grant funding is vital to help meet these additional expenses and will bring several long-term benefits, including to: support California's agricultural producers, strengthen farm-to-school partnerships, improve children's health, and reduce the climate footprint of our food system.

These provisions will go a long way to prevent hunger and improve nutrition while school is in session, but we must take additional action to support low-income students when schools are not in session that are proven to be the times of greatest hunger.

If funded, these investments will reduce child hunger, improve the school academic environment, help low-income families, and provide economic and social benefits that support California farmers. For these reasons, our supporting organizations are proud to support these requests and urge investment in these critical programs in the 2021 Budget Act.

We look forward to working with the Administration and the Legislature in the coming weeks to ensure that Universal Meals, including breakfast and lunch, are included in the final budget with enough funding to make this proposal a reality without creating school meal debt for parents or deficits for schools.

Sincerely,

9to5

Acterra

Agricultural Institute of Marin

Alameda County Community Food Bank

Alliance of Nurse for Healthy Environments - ANHE

Alum Rock Union Elementary School District

Alvord Unified School District

AKI

Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency

American Academy of Pediatrics, California

American Diabetes Association

American Heart Association

American Legion, Santa Cruz

Asian Americans for Housing and Environmental Justice

Asian Food Trade Association

Bay Area Community Resources

Bay Area Legal Aid

Bay Area Nutrition and Physical Activity Collaborative

Bay Area Ranchers Coop BAR-C

Bayshore Elementary School District

Berkeley Food Institute

Bonita Unified School District

Cajon Valley Union School District

California Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance

California Association of Food Banks

California Food and Farming Network

California Immigrant Policy Center

California School Nurses Organization

California State PTA

Californians for Disability Rights, Inc.

Calistoga Joint Unified School District

Campbell Union School District

Carpinteria Unified School District

Center for Ecoliteracy

Center for Science in the Public Interest

Central California Food Bank

Central Kitchen

Ceres Community Project

Children's Advocacy Institute

City of Watsonville Environmental Science Workshop

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations

Coastside Hope

Common Sense Media

Community Action of Napa Valley, Food Bank

Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County
Community Food Bank of Stockton
Community Health Trust of Pajaro Valley
Compass Family Services
Conscious Kitchen
County of Santa Clara
Cultiva La Salud
Dignity Health Connected Living, North State Food Bank
Dolores Huerta Foundation
Eat. Learn. Play. Foundation
Emerald Earth Farms
Emergency Food Bank of Stockton
End Child Poverty California/GRACE Institute
Environmental Working Group
EPIC
Equal Rights Advocates
Extra Food
Feeding San Diego
Feeding America Riverside & San Bernardino Counties
Fiber Shed
FIND Food Bank
First 5 California
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano
Food Bank of Eldorado County
Food Bank of Santa Barbara County
Food Bank for Monterey County
Food For People
Food Link for Tulare County
Food Matters
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
Food Share of Ventura County
Food Tribe
FoodCorps
Fort Bragg Food Bank
Foster Poultry Farms
Fresh Approach
Fresno Barrios Unidos
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Friends of the Earth
Frog Hollow Farm
GLIDE
Growing the Table
Health Improvement Partnership of Santa Cruz County
Healthier Kids Foundation

Healthy Day Partners
Healthy Schools Campaign
Holy Cross Food Pantry
Housing on Merit
Hunger Action Los Angeles
Imperial Valley Food Bank
Inland Equity Partnership
Innovative Health Solutions
Interfaith Food Bank for Amador County
Jacob's Heart Cancer Support Services
K12 Food Pros
Kehillat Israel
Kings Community Action Agency
Koreatown Youth & Community Center
LA FOWLER, LLC
Lakeport Unified School District
Lakeside Union School District
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
Life Lab
Long Beach Unified School District
Los Angeles Community Action Network
Los Angeles Food Policy Council
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
LunchAssist
Mar Vista Homeless Task Force
Marin Food Policy Council
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Merced County Food Bank
Monterey Peninsula Unified School District
Moreland School District
Morgan Hill Unified School District
Morris Grassfed
National Association of Social Workers California
National Council of Jewish Women California Policy Advocacy Network
National Farm to School Network
National Women's Political Caucus of California
NextGen California
No Kid Hungry
NOSH - Napa's Operative for School food Health
Oakland Food Policy Council
Oakland Unified School District
Office of Kat Taylor
Orange County Food Bank
Oxnard School District

Pacific Elementary School District
ParentChild+ Bay Area
Pesticide Action Network
Placer County Food Bank
Project Ropa
Redwood Empire Food Bank
Richards Grassfed Beef
River City Food Bank
Root Down Farm, LLC
Roots of Change
Sacramento City USD
Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services
Sacramento Food Policy Council
Sage Garden Project
Salud Para La Gente
San Diego Childhood Obesity Initiative
San Diego Food Bank
San Diego Hunger Coalition
San Diego Unified School District
San Francisco Senior & Disability Action
San Francisco-Marin Food Bank
San Jose Bridge Communities
San Lorenzo Family Help Center
San Luis Coastal Unified School District
San Luis Obispo Food Bank
San Ramon Valley Unified School District
Santa Cruz American Legion Post 64
Santa Cruz City Schools
Santa Cruz Community Health Centers
Santa Cruz Medical Society
Santa Rosa City Schools
SCCSBA Legislative Action Committee
Second Harvest Food Bank Orange County
Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley
Second Harvest of the Greater Valley
Senior & Disability Action San Francisco
Sequoia Science Foundation
Sierra Harvest
Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits
SLCUSD Food
Slow Food California
Snowline J.U.S.D.
Solana Beach School District

Southern Humboldt Unified School District
SPUR
SRVUSD Child Nutrition
Stemple Creek Ranch
Stronger California Advocates Network
Sustainable Agriculture Education
Teen Kitchen Project
The Gubbio Project
The HEAL Project
The Opportunity Institute
The Praxis Project
The Resource Connection Food Bank
The San Diego County Childhood Obesity
The Women's Building
TomKat Ranch
Turlock Unified School District
Turning Green / Conscious Kitchen
unBox
United States Healthful Food Council Inc., DBA Eat REAL
Urban & Environmental Policy Institute, Occidental College
Village Lutheran Church and Interfaith Center
Wellness in the Schools, Inc.
West Contra Costa Unified School District
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Westside Coalition
Westside Food Bank
Westside Infant-Family Network (WIN)
Westwood Presbyterian Church
Women's Foundation California
Yolo Food Bank
Yuba-Sutter Food Bank

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