



March 3, 2020

Honorable Toni Atkins  
President pro Tempore, California State Senate

Honorable Anthony Rendon  
Speaker, California State Assembly

Honorable Holly J. Mitchell  
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

Honorable Phil Ting  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget

Honorable Bob Wieckowski  
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 2 on  
Resources, Environmental Protection, Energy and  
Transportation

Honorable Richard Bloom  
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3 on  
Resources and Transportation

**RE: Farm to School Grant Program and Ongoing Office of Farm to Fork Funding - Department of Food and Agriculture (8570) Budget - SUPPORT**

Dear Legislative and Budget Committee Leaders,

The Center for Ecoliteracy, the Office of Kat Taylor, NextGen California, and the California School Employees Association (CSEA) are part of a coalition that has been working on the issue of healthy school food. We write in strong support of the \$10 million included in Governor Newsom’s 2020-21 proposed budget for a Farm to School Grant Program and Office of Farm to Fork. Specifically, this funding will provide \$8.5 million in one-time funding to establish a new Farm to School Grant Program and \$1.5 million in ongoing funding to sustain and amplify the work of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Office of Farm to Fork. This increased investment will establish California as a national leader in providing our students with fresh, nutritious, and locally-grown food.

Research has found that it takes 35 to 50 hours of nutrition education to create long-term behavioral changes such as creating the habit of eating more fruits and vegetables; yet most children receive only 3.4 hours a year of such education – less than a tenth of the recommended amount. (1) By establishing a solid Farm to School linkage and the accompanying experiential learning opportunities, students’ eating habits can be transformed, which helps address the public health crises of food insecurity and obesity.

Our organizations support efforts to use these grant funds to create and expand “complete” farm to school programs with the following three dimensions: (1) increased local food procurement; (2) education in classrooms and cafeterias; and (3) experiential learning in school gardens, agriculture programs, and culinary programs. By weaving together these three elements, the Farm to School Grant Program can be used to

provide “hands on” learning as well as help students better understand how food affects their health, the health of their communities, and the health of our environment.

The Farm to School Grant Program and the resulting increased purchases of California-grown school food will create many benefits for California kids, schools, farmers, and our economy, including:

- School food in California is a \$2.4 billion industry, and school cafeterias can often be the largest “restaurant” in town. By directing more of this investment to local farmers, schools can help local economies thrive with every dollar they invest generating between \$1.03 - \$2.40 of economic activity. (2)
- Students consume 35 - 50% of their daily calories at school (3) and studies have shown that kids who eat healthy food are better prepared to succeed academically. (4)
- Students are more likely to consume food that is fresh, (5) reducing food waste.
- Healthy students are absent less often, increasing attendance-based revenue for schools. (6)

This coalition has seen firsthand the benefits that the CDFA office of Farm to Fork can provide and therefore its untapped potential to support school districts across the state that will be realized with this funding. As the core supporting partner for the National Farm to School Network in California, the Office of Farm to Fork plays a critical role in convening stakeholders, creating a network where best practices and ideas can be shared, and providing resources for complete Farm to School programs.

Our organizations believe that this additional funding creates an enormous opportunity to support California farmers, expand nutrition education, and improve student health and academic performance. For the aforementioned reasons, we strongly support the Governor’s proposed \$10 million investment in the Farm to School Grant Program and the Office of Farm to Fork and respectfully request your approval of this funding project.

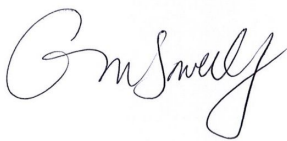
Respectfully,



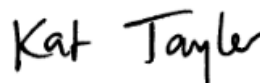
Ben Valdepeña  
Association President  
California School Employees Association



Adam Kesselman  
Executive Director  
Center for Ecoliteracy



Arnold Sowell Jr.  
Executive Director  
NextGen California



Kat Taylor  
Principal  
The Office of Kat Taylor

CC: Office of Governor Gavin Newsom  
Office of First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom  
California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond  
Senator Brian Dahle  
Senator Mike McGuire  
Senator Bill Monning  
Senator Henry I. Stern  
Assemblymember Vincent Fong  
Assemblymember Cristina Garcia  
Assemblymember Kevin Mullin  
Assemblymember Jim Patterson  
Assemblymember Eloise Gómez Reyes  
Assemblymember Luz M. Rivas  
Assemblymember Jay Obernolte

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6. Food Research and Action Center (2010). "How Improving Federal Nutrition Program Access and Quality Work Together to Reduce Hunger and Promote Healthy Eating," p. 4. [www.frac.org/pdf/CNR01\\_qualityandaccess.pdf](http://www.frac.org/pdf/CNR01_qualityandaccess.pdf).