

May 27, 2020

The Honorable Holly Mitchell
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

Submitted via electronic mail

RE: Senate Budget Subcommittee 1 on Education Recommendation for Issue 6: Federal Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds for Local Education Agencies - SUPPORT

Dear Chairwoman Mitchell,

We are writing to express support for emergency school meals and the vital role they play in feeding students during these challenging times. We urge the Senate Budget Committee to adopt the [recommendation made](#) by the Senate Subcommittee 1 on Education on Issue 6: Federal Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds.

On May 25, 2020, the Senate Subcommittee 1 on Education [unanimously adopted](#) the staff recommendation to approve \$63.2 million for a COVID-19 child nutrition reimbursement account. This would be administered by the Department of Education (CDE) and provide a reimbursement rate for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) who have served or will serve school meals from the date of COVID closures to the start of a new school year meal program. This supplemental funding is critical to help cover the additional costs and losses of revenue associated with COVID-19 school food service, and will aid LEAs in continuing to safely serve meals to students during the pandemic.

It is our hope that this financial support will ultimately come from, or be augmented by, the \$714 million in USDA funding allocated by the CARES Act (H.R. 748/ S. 3548) for school nutrition. We are grateful that the subcommittee has recognized the need to step up in the absence of federal flexibility on the CARES funds, which cannot currently be used to cover the budget deficits resulting from executing emergency school food programs, and are duplicative of existing USDA funding for per-meal reimbursements at existing rates. We urge the Legislature and Administration to pursue guidance from Congress and USDA so that the CARES funding can be used to ensure school nutrition programs continue to provide critical meals through summer and into the fall.

We support the language in the subcommittee's recommendation that explicitly allows the \$63.2 million of ESSER funds to be used for its original purposes should additional guidance and flexibility on the CARES funding be secured on the federal level. This funding is essential for many public school districts to be able to continue providing hungry students with emergency school meals.

Thank you for your consideration, and the opportunity to provide input on this critical issue.

Respectfully,



Kat Taylor
Principal
The Office of Kat Taylor



Arnold Sowell Jr.
Executive Director
NextGen California



Kathy Webster
Food Advocacy Manager
TomKat Ranch



Adam Kesselman
Executive Director
Center for Ecoliteracy

CC:

The Honorable Jim Nielsen
Vice Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Jim Beall
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Anna M. Caballero
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Brian Dahle
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Maria Elena Durazo
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Melissa Hurtado
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Connie M. Leyva
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Mike McGuire
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Melissa A. Melendez
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Bill Monning
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable John M. W. Moorlach
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Mike Morrell
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Richard Pan
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Richard D. Roth
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Henry I. Stern
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

The Honorable Bob Wieckowski
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee