



2020 State Legislative Issue Paper

The California School Nutrition Association (CSNA) supports school districts feeding every child a nutritious and delicious meal at school each school day to support a healthy child ready to learn.

Governor's Budget Proposals

Increased Ongoing Funding

CSNA greatly appreciates the Governor's proposal to provide an increase of \$60 million in ongoing Proposition 98 funds for free & reduced priced meals. This proposal would be the first increase in funding for school nutrition, outside of a cost-of-living-adjustment, since 2007 and would amount to roughly an \$0.08 increase in the per meal state reimbursement rate. However, while this funding would increase the reimbursement rate, the Administration is also proposing that this additional funding be used to improve the quality of school meals and increase participation in state and federal meal programs. CSNA supports these goals but it is important to note that school districts are already struggling to cover their present costs with their current level of funding.

Recent legislation, like SB 250 (Hertzberg, 2017) and SB 265 (Hertzberg, 2019), have created growing funding challenges for many school districts. CSNA supports the intent behind both SB 250 and SB 265 and opposes any policy which intentionally identifies a student and causes that student to be embarrassed or feel shamed. However, while these bills did not intend to allow for the indefinite accrual of unpaid school meal fees, neither bill provided LEAs with any additional funding to cover the increased costs created following their enactment. If a school district is unable to recover delinquent debt by the end of a fiscal year, the debt is considered uncollectable or "bad debt." Federal regulation prohibits the use of federal funding to cover this debt and instead requires school districts to use nonfederal funds to backfill this cost. This typically means school districts are having to pull from their general fund to cover this "bad debt," which in turn adversely impacts funding for other student services.

As this proposal moves forward, CSNA would encourage the Administration and the Legislature to keep this funding flexible to allow districts to use this money for their local school nutrition needs.

Funding for School Food Service Worker Training

The Governor's January budget includes \$10 million one-time funds to provide training for school food service workers to promote healthier and more nutritious meals. The U.S. Department of Agriculture currently mandates continuing education for Food Service employees. However, CSNA believes nutrition education should be a priority not only for staff, but students as well. Therefore, CSNA supports expanding the scope of this funding to include Nutrition Education to promote healthy behaviors for students. Nutrition Education is an integral part of connecting the cafeteria to the student learning environment. It allows students to make informed choices far beyond the classroom that can affect their overall health and productivity. Students who receive Nutrition Education in the classroom are able to



put that education into direct practice every day. Examples of Nutrition Education that could be supported through this funding may include:

- Menu Boards for school cafeterias depicting positive choices in the cafeteria and proper portions
- Classroom educational support to link the cafeteria to healthy lifestyle choices
- Specialized learning activities to engage students with food in the lifecycle (examples include a visit from the California Dairy Council- Mobile classroom or an on campus Farmers Market)

Funding for Farm-to-School Grants

CSNA supports the idea behind the Governor's proposal to provide \$10 million one-time, and \$1.5 million annually thereafter, to establish a Farm to School Grant Program. Increasing access to healthy foods is of great importance to CSNA. However, in order for this funding to have the greatest impact, the Administration and Legislature must ensure that the funding is available equally to all districts that are interested. The use of a competitive grant based on free &/or reduced priced meal benefit percentages would disadvantage several districts as well as smaller and rural districts that are in need of additional funding. For many districts, the ability to provide fresh meals may be due to facility and storage ability as opposed to strictly food access.

2020 School Facilities Bond

CSNA appreciates the inclusion of the construction of school kitchens as an eligible use of bond funds under the Public Preschool, K-12, and College Health and Safety Bond Act of 2020. The ability to modernize outdated school kitchens is essential to ensuring that school districts can continue to provide students with meals of the highest quality. Federal law severely limits the use of funds received through the National School Lunch Program and Breakfast Program for building or modernizing our central kitchens or on-site facilities and the most recent statewide school bond (Prop. 51, 2016) did not explicitly include school kitchens as an acceptable use of bond funds. If the Bond is passed in March, school districts will have access to additional funding to modernize existing, or construct entirely new, school kitchens so they can be equipped to best serve their students.