

June 6, 2007

To the California Congressional Delegation:

We are writing to urge you to include California in two important federal child nutrition programs that are available in other states, but not our state—**the Simplified Summer Food Program and the Afterschool Supper Program.**

Nutritious food plays a critical role in California's afterschool and summer programs, attracting children to programs that keep them learning, engaged, and safe while their parents work, and ensuring that children, who often arrive at an afterschool or summer program ravenous, have the energy they need to focus.

Simplified Summer Food Program

Nearly two million of California's children who rely on free or reduced-price school lunch during the school year no longer have access to those nutritious meals during summer vacation or during year-round schools' extended breaks. This is often due to the unnecessary complicated accounting rules required by the federal Summer Food Service Program. These rules make operating the program less attractive and increase administrative costs, making it difficult for sponsors to break even.

The Simplified Summer Food Program eliminates the difficult and unnecessary accounting requirements. It currently applies in twenty-six states, but not California. Sponsors in simplified states automatically receive the maximum federal reimbursement.

Simplifying the program has had a tremendous impact on participation. The rule change began in 2001 as a pilot in the 13 states with the lowest participation. Since then participation in the original 13 states has grown by 41.3 percent, compared to a 16.2 percent drop in California, which is not a pilot state. To successfully rebuild participation, California must be added to the Simplified Summer Food Program.

In addition to supporting quality afterschool and summer programs and combating childhood hunger, both nutrition programs are important weapons in the battle against childhood obesity. The meals and snacks served through these programs must meet nutritional guidelines similar to those required in the school breakfast and lunch programs. Studies have found that children who eat school breakfast and lunch have a healthier diet than those who do not. They drink more milk, eat more fruits and vegetables, and consume less saturated fat.

Afterschool Supper Program

Currently, afterschool programs in California can only receive federal funds to provide suppers to children under age 13. Moreover, the program must document each child's household income in order to determine the reimbursement that the program receives. These rules keep many programs from offering suppers at all, and create unnecessary paperwork and tension among children where supper is offered.

The Afterschool Supper Program allows children of all ages (age 18 and under) to participate with vastly reduced paperwork. The afterschool program qualifies simply by being in a low-income area where 50 percent or more of the children qualify for free or reduced-price meals (the same requirement for receiving After-School Education and Safety funding), and the program then receives the maximum federal reimbursement rate for all of the suppers, which makes operating the program much more viable.

We ask that California be added to the list of states included in the federally-funded Afterschool Supper Program—Delaware, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Oregon, and Pennsylvania. Also, it would reduce bureaucratic red tape by allowing these suppers to be provided through the National School Lunch Program as well as the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and through California's existing year-round pilot nutrition program (a pilot that reduces paperwork burdens resulting from switching back and forth between summer and school year nutrition programs).

We ask you to:

Simplified Summer Food – Cosponsor the Simplified Summer Food legislation currently proposed in the House (H.R. 1740) by Reps. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY); Ray LaHood (R-IL); Frank Pallone, Jr (D-NJ); Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ); and Senate (S. 790) by Sens Richard Lugar (R-IN); Edward Kennedy (D-MA); and Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) that would expand simplified nationwide. And write to the House and Senate Agriculture Appropriators and urge them to include nationwide simplified summer in the FY 2008 appropriations legislation.

California Afterschool Supper – Urge the Senate HELP and House Education and Labor Committees to include funding for a California Afterschool Supper Program in the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. Attempts to include California in the afterschool supper program were advanced in the past, but thwarted at the last minute.

Sincerely,

A World Fit For Kids!, Los Angeles
Ala Costa Centers, Berkeley
Alameda County Community Food Bank, Oakland
Bay Area Partnership for Children and Youth, Oakland
Berkeley Youth Alternatives, Berkeley
Bethany Lutheran, Long Beach
Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Oxnard and Port Hueneme, Oxnard
CA Catholic Conference, Sacramento
California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness Program, Berkeley
California Association of Food Banks, Sacramento
California Food Policy Advocates, Los Angeles
California Hunger Action Coalition, Oakland
California School-Age Consortium, San Francisco
Catholic Charities, San Jose
Catholic Charities Diocese of Fresno, Fresno

Catholic Charities of California, Sacramento
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Stockton, Stockton
Central Coast Hunger Coalition, Watsonville
Child Care Food Program Roundtable, Shingle Springs
City of San Mateo, San Mateo
Contra Costa Child Care Council, Concord
County of San Diego HHSA, San Diego
County of Santa Clara, San Jose
Creative Out-of-School Learning, Petaluma
Diocese of Oakland, Oakland
East Region Public Health, El Cajon
East Region Public Health Nursing, El Cajon
East Region- County of San Diego, El Cajon
Familia Center, Santa Cruz
Family Service Agency of San Mateo County, South San Francisco
Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, CA
Food Bank for Monterey County, Salinas
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, Concord
FOOD Share, Inc., Oxnard
Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, Santa Barbara
Fresno Metro Ministry, Fresno
Grupo de la Comida, San Francisco
Haight Ashbury Food Program, San Francisco
Hands for Hope, LA
Harbor UCLA, Torrance
Health and Human Services Agency, El Cajon
Hidden Harvest, Coachella
Imperial Valley Food Bank, El Centro
Lighthouse Community Charter School, Oakland
Live Oak Family Resource Center, Santa Cruz
Los Angeles Regional Foodbank, Los Angeles
MAZON:A Jewish Response to Hunger, Los Angeles
McCullum Youth Court, Oakland
mcoe, Ukiah
Monterey County Farm to School Partnership, Seaside
Oakland Community After-School Alliance, Oakland
Oakland Leaf, Oakland
Orcutt Union School District Campus Connection School Age Program, Orcutt
Petaluma City Schools, Petaluma
Redway Family Resource Center, Redway
Richstone Family Center, Hawthorne
San Diego County, El Cajon
San Francisco Food Bank, San Francisco
Santa Cruz County Parks and Recreation, Santa Cruz
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, Orange
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, San Jose
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties, Watsonville

SF Food Security Task Force, San Francisco
St. Joseph Health System, Gilroy
St. Joseph's Family Center, Gilroy
St. Margaret's Center, Lennox
Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center, San Francisco
The James A. Venable Community Center, Cabazon
The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, Los Angeles
Ujirani Family Resource Center, San Jose
Ukiah Food Bank, Ukiah
University of California Cooperative Extension, Alameda
Wheatland After School Programs, Beale AFB
Youth In Focus, Oakland