

November 5, 2015

California Sen. Tony Mendoza
District Office
17315 Studebaker Road, Suite 332
Cerritos, CA 90703

Dear Congressman Tony Mendoza,

As a resident of California studying dietetics, I would like to remind you of the AB 292 Pupil Nutrition: Free or Reduced-Price Meals amendment to Section 49550 of the Education Code. You are currently on the appropriations committee to review this bill and on August 28, 2015, the committee held this bill under submission. I encourage you to vote to pass this bill.

In California, there are more than 6 million students enrolled in the public school system. Three in every 5 of these children come from low income families and are eligible to participate in the Free or Reduced Price Meals school lunch program. For many of these students, the lunches they receive at school may be the only source of nutritious food they have. However, some schools do not give students an adequate amount of time to eat lunch. According to a state survey conducting in 2013, it's estimated that 24.7% of elementary schools in California allocate less than 20 minutes for students to eat lunch. Furthermore, in 72% of elementary schools and 54.9% of middle schools, the time from the last student to receive lunch to the end of the lunch break is less than 20 minutes. This is not enough time for students to eat lunch.

With the passing of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, more money and resources have been allocated to improving the nutritional quality of school lunches. However, these funds and resources are wasted if students do not have enough time to eat these more nutritious lunches. Not only may inadequate time to eat lunch negate the benefits of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, but it may also contribute to increased food waste and childhood obesity.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this issue. Please vote to pass the AB 292 Pupil Nutrition: Free or Reduced-Price Meals amendment to Section 49550 of the Education Code in the committee of appropriations.

Best Regards,

Anna Arnett
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Help Students Benefit from Nutritious School Lunches: Increase Lunchtime to At Least 20 Minutes



AB 292 Pupil Nutrition: Free or Reduced-Price Meals

This amendment to Section 49550 of the Education Code requires that schools allow students adequate time to each lunch at school. The bill would mandate that school districts allow students at least twenty minutes after being served to eat lunch. This would support current efforts to improve child nutrition by giving students adequate time to eat nutritious meals provided by schools. Please support this amendment to Section 49550 of the Education Code to provide a state policy to promote child nutrition.

How Allowing Adequate School Lunchtime Improves Student Food Choices

With the introduction of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, the cost of school lunches has increased in order to meet new nutrition regulations for school lunches. However, when children are not given enough time to eat, they are less likely to choose and eat nutritious foods. Students who have less than 20 minutes to eat lunch select less fruit, drink less milk, and eat fewer vegetables compared to students that are given at least 25 minutes to eat lunch according to Harvard researchers Cohen and Jahn. Allowing students adequate time to eat can improve dietary intake of nutritious foods.

How Allowing Adequate School Lunchtime Benefits Children

Of the more than 6 million students enrolled in public schools, 3 in 5 are eligible for free or reduced-priced school meals. With so many children relying on free or reduced-priced school meals, it becomes especially important that student be given adequate time to eat their meals. Inadequate time to eat can cause students to rush and ignore the body's natural hunger and satiety cues. Researchers Ohkuma and Kirakawa at Kyushu University found a positive relationship between eating quickly and obesity. Current intense efforts on preventing childhood obesity are made futile when children are not given an environment where they can practice good eating habits.

Please support allowing adequate school lunchtime by supporting the AB 292 Pupil Nutrition: Free or Reduced-Price Meals amendment to Section 49550 of the Education Code.

