



AB 1871 (Bonta) – Meals in Charter Schools

(As Introduced)

SUMMARY

AB 1871 would ensure that low-income, public charter school students – like all other low-income, traditional public school students – have access to at least one nutritious, free or reduced-price school meal each school day.

BACKGROUND

In 1975, California established a law to protect children from hunger by guaranteeing that all low-income, traditional public school students would have access to at least one nutritious, free or reduced-price school meal each school day. Despite attending public schools, charter school students are not protected under this law.

Public charter schools can receive federal entitlement funds and categorical state funds for the operation of school meal programs. All schools have a variety of options for operating meal programs, from preparing meals in an onsite or central kitchen to contracting with a local school district or private vendor.

Public charter schools have grown rapidly in California since being authorized in 1992. California now houses the most charter schools and charter school students in the country, enrolling more than 630,000 students, including an estimated 27,000 new students in the 2017-18 school year.

THE NEED FOR THE BILL

More than 340,000 low-income students attend California public charter schools.

School meals support the academic achievement and fundamental well-being of all students, particularly low-income students who may not otherwise have adequate access to nutritious meals. Hungry children

struggle to learn, grow, and achieve at their fullest potential.

As public charter schools to continue to expand across California, so will the number of low-income, public school students who do not have equitable access to free or reduced-price school meals. Withholding such important resources exacerbates the achievement gap for low-income students, including students of color.

School nutrition programs are a critical resource for all students in need, regardless of which public school they attend. It should be the intent of the Legislature that no student goes hungry in a California public school.

SOLUTION

AB 1871 is an opportunity to advance equity and support the academic achievement and well-being of charter school students. AB 1871 would require a charter school to provide each needy pupil with one nutritionally adequate free or reduced-price meal during each schoolday.

SUPPORT

California Food Policy Advocates (Sponsor)
California Parent Teacher Association (Co-Sponsor)
California Teachers Association (Co-Sponsor)
Western Center on Law and Poverty (Co-Sponsor)
American Academy of Pediatrics – CA
Food for People

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