

Assembly Bill 679

Food with Care – Fair Pay for Childcare Providers Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (AD-14)

SUMMARY

AB 679 provides equity to childcare nutrition programs by eliminating the supplemental State Meal Reimbursement rate gap for feeding young children in all childcare centers and family care homes.

BACKGROUND

All children deserve to be well nourished and placed in the best position to thrive. But underlying federal and state rules for childcare meal programs have failed to reflect California's accurate poverty level—keeping many children from accessing nutritious, affordable meals and forcing childcare providers to spend excessive amounts of money to feed their children, despite already operating on razor-thin margins. For example, a family of four must make less than \$34,060 a year for a childcare center to serve a free meal¹, and the cost of food purchased away from home increased by 8.6% in 2022², making the childcare provider's job that much more difficult.

ISSUE

The harm to children and the burden on care providers is exacerbated by state policy that financially penalizes certain childcare providers who feed healthy meals to kids in their care. Existing state statute creates an unfair “reimbursement rate gap” that limits family child care providers to only 75% of the state reimbursement for meals served. This means family childcare providers, primarily Black, Latina, and immigrant women, receive no state funding for one of every four meals they serve. Compared to how the state reimburses child care centers and K-12

schools for meals served, family child care providers are unfairly shortchanged.

Childcare providers also must contend with California's ever-increasing high cost of living. Each year, providers absorb hundreds of millions of dollars in expenses for meals served to children, and despite the spike in food prices, the state reimbursement rate does not respond to or reflect these elevated costs.

SOLUTION

It is the current policy of the state that no child be hungry while attending a preschool program and that preschools provide for the nutritional needs of all children in attendance. For this goal to be realized, California needs to reasonably invest in nourishing our kids in care and supporting childcare providers.

AB 679 eliminates the discriminatory reimbursement rate gap that underpays and undervalues family childcare home providers serving healthy meals to kids in their care. In a time of increased food costs, inequitable family childcare compensation, and increased food insecurity experienced by providers and the families they care for, AB 679 provides family childcare providers with needed funds to pay for meals served, including the increased cost of food, labor, and transportation.

SUPPORT

- Nourish California (Co-Sponsor)
- CACFP Roundtable (Co-Sponsor)
- Child Care Providers United (CCPU)

¹“Income Eligibility Scales for School Year 2020–21.” *Income Eligibility Scales for School Year 2020–21 - Rates, Eligibility Scales, & Funding* (CA Dept of Education), <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/rs/scales2021.asp>.

²“USDA Summary Findings.” *USDA ERS - Summary Findings*, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-price->

[outlook/summary-findings/#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20food%20prices%20increased%20by%209.9%20percent.,categories%20grew%20faster%20than%20their%20historical%20average%20rate.](#)

CONTACT

Cameron Gadson

Office of Assemblymember Wicks
(916) 319-2014

cameron.gadson@asm.ca.gov

