

Senate Bill 348

Healthy Meals for Kids

Senator Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley) & Co-Authors

THIS BILL

Senate Bill 348 will help ensure that California's new universal meal program provides our students healthy, nutritious meals by enacting the new federal school nutrition standards aimed at reducing sugars, salt and fat and increasing whole grains in school meals. Additionally, SB 348 will require the state to define an adequate time to eat school meals and maximize newly available federal funds to help prevent childhood hunger during the summer.

ISSUE

In 2021, California became the first state in the nation to establish a universal meal program providing every public school pupil the right not only to a free education, but also to two nutritious meals each school day, free of charge. This proposal was initially proposed in Senate Bill 364 and then passed in the Budget Act of 2021.

Additional investments in the 22-23 Budget increased the ability of schools to purchase locally and sustainably grown food and to prepare fresh, rather than pre-packaged, meals.

Nutritional science has long established that children who eat meals at school have improved nutrition and health outcomes. This is especially true for children who experience high rates of food insecurity. By building off of the standards in the National School Lunch Program, and adding additional support for the quality of the meals served, California has acted to ensure that our children improve their nutritional health.

However, our current standards do not go far enough to protect children's health because they lack limits on added sugar. Health professionals maintain that school-age children should have less than 26 grams of added sugar per day. On [Feb 3, 2023, the USDA proposed updates](#) to school meal guidelines to reduce sugar and sodium intake. SB 348 compliments these new proposed guidelines.

A diet high in sugar increases the risk of many health problems including tooth decay, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. High sugar

intake among children is also associated with poor behavioral outcomes and reduced memory capacity

Serving freshly grown & prepared healthy school meals is increasingly attainable not only because of new funding for scratch-cooking in schools but also because the food industry has responded to extensive calls for healthy options by producing healthier food.

This bill will increase the likelihood that the two daily meals California's public school students have access to are the healthiest meal that we can offer. What's more, SB 348 will help reduce childhood hunger when school is out of session by maximizing federally funded child nutrition benefits.

SOLUTION

SB 348 will improve the health of children by:

- Reducing sugar and salt in school meals.
- Requiring schools to give children adequate time to eat a school meal.
- Allowing for more food to be served to older children when needed.
- Maximizing & expanding upon new federal summer childhood nutrition programs.

SUPPORT

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Roots of Change
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Sacramento Food Policy Council
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CONTACT

Jessica Bartholow
Office of Senator Nancy Skinner
(916) 651-4009 | jessica.bartholow@sen.ca.gov

Josh Wright
Office of Senator Nancy Skinner
(916) 651-4009 | josh.wright@sen.ca.gov