



July 3, 2017

The Honorable Patrick O'Donnell
Chair, Assembly Committee on Education
1020 N Street, Room 159
Sacramento, California 95814
Fax: (916) 319-2187

RE: SB 138 (McGuire): Free and Reduced Lunch
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember O'Donnell:

I am writing on behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, to let you know that we strongly support proposed legislation SB 138 (McGuire). This bill would require schools with very high student poverty rates to offer universal free breakfast and lunch service, unless this would cause undue financial hardship, and would require that the State Department of Education share Medi-Cal participation data with school districts so as to direct Medi-Cal recipient students into the Free & Reduced Price Lunch Program.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, students who participate in the USDA School Breakfast Program have higher academic performance, improved memory, and decreased absenteeism compared with eligible students who do not. However, not all eligible students participate in school breakfast programs or the Free & Reduced Price Lunch Program. This is in part because a student's family often must submit paperwork on their behalf to qualify; many families may not even be aware of the program, or have such challenging home circumstances that even such a relatively small ask is difficult to carry out. As a result, some of our most vulnerable students miss out on the chance to eat healthy, affordable meals at school.

SB 138 (McGuire) would improve student participation in school meal programs by requiring that schools with very high student poverty rates offer universal free breakfast and lunch service to all students, without requiring students or their families to submit any paperwork, and with an exception for those school districts or county offices of education that can demonstrate that this would cause them financial hardship. It would additionally allow students to be automatically certified if they are Medi-Cal recipients, lessening the paperwork burden on low-income families and ensuring that more California children receive the nutrition they need to succeed at school.

Pediatricians across the state urge an AYE vote on SB 138 (McGuire). We thank you for your leadership on behalf of the health and well-being of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Patel', with a large, stylized initial 'M' and a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Mona Patel, M.D., Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Co-Chair, State Government Affairs Committee
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

CC: Kris Calvin, CEO; AAP-CA Leadership; Lydia Bourne; The Honorable Mike McGuire