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March 7, 2017

The Honorable Robert Hertzberg  
State Capitol, Room 4038  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Fax: (916) 651-4918

RE: SB 250 (Hertzberg): Child Hunger Prevention and Fair Treatment Act of 2017  
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Senator Hertzberg:

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 your proposed legislation SB 250 (Hertzberg). This bill would take steps to ensure that children are not shamed or disciplined for unpaid school lunch fees, and would require local educational agencies to exhaust all options to qualify students with 5 or more unpaid school lunches for free or reduced-price lunches before they bill for the unpaid fees.

It is of the utmost importance that all California families have access to sufficient and nutritious food. Not only do hunger and malnutrition pose severe immediate and long-term health risks for the person who suffers them, they also have an enormous social cost, as the cost of long-term care for resulting chronic diseases and disabilities far outweighs the cost of preventing them through food distribution. However, despite essential benefits programs such as CalFresh and the Free & Reduced Price Lunch Program, 40% of low-income households in California cannot afford sufficient food. This is unacceptable for a state as wealthy as California.

SB 250 (Hertzberg) would reduce child hunger throughout California by making sure that unenrolled students eligible for the Free & Reduced Price Lunch Program do not go hungry at school because of an inability to pay for food. It would also help to reduce the stigma that affects children whose families do not pay their school lunch fees by prohibiting school officials from disciplining students for their parents' lack of payment, and would help make sure that food is never withheld from a child at school as punishment for their parents' actions.

Pediatricians across the state support SB 250 (Hertzberg). 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, consisting of a series of loops and a long, sweeping tail that extends towards the upper right.

Zoey Goore, M.D., M.P.H., Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
Executive Board Member, American Academy of Pediatrics, California

CC: Kris Calvin, CEO; AAP-CA Leadership; Lydia Bourne