

May 26, 2019

Senator Robert M. Hertzberg
State Capitol, Room 313
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 265 (Hertzberg): Pupil meals: Child Hunger Prevention and Fair Treatment Act of 2017
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Senator Hertzberg:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing the over 5,000 board-certified pediatrician members of California AAP Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 statewide, strongly supports your proposed legislation SB 265 to ensure that a pupil whose parent or guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed, treated differently, or served a meal that differs from what a pupil paying for a school meal would receive.

Childhood experience of hunger has both short- and long-term effects that are highly damaging to the child's health and well-being. Over 1.7 million California schoolchildren are food-insecure. School meal programs are essential to these students' positive educational and health outcomes. California children of families with incomes below 130% of the Federal Poverty Line attending public schools and charter schools are entitled to a meal funded through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), but not all children in California who are eligible for assistance enroll, and some families still find themselves without enough money to pay for school lunches.

In 2017, a statewide report showed that approximately one third of the largest school districts in the state had written meal charge policies instructing school lunch officials to take action against a child who had an unpaid balance owed by their parent or guardian, a practice known as "lunch shaming." SB 250 (Hertzberg, 2017) made that practice illegal but some schools maintain policies that discriminate against children, denying children as young as five years of age a meal or serving them an alternative meal because they didn't have lunch money that day.

SB 265 would build on SB 250 by helping to ensure California children receive adequate nutrition without the threat of shaming. Pediatricians across the state of California strongly support SB 265. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and well-being of the children, youth, and families of California.

Sincerely,



Kris Calvin
Chief Executive Officer, American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP-CA Leadership