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March 19, 2021

The Honorable Adrin Nazarian  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0046

**RE: AB 558 (Nazarian) School meals: plant-based food and milk options: California School Plant-Based Food and Beverage Program**

**AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Nazarian,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports AB 558, as amended on March 5, 2021, which would establish the California Climate-Friendly Food Program to provide incentives for making healthy and low-carb food and beverages available to public school pupils.

According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, vegetarian diets are healthful and nutritionally adequate for all ages and may reduce long-term risk for heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, obesity, and other chronic diseases. Plant-based diets are more environmentally sustainable than diets rich in animal products because they use fewer natural resources and cause less environmental damage.

Many school districts in California would like to offer more plant-based food, but face cost barriers since animal-based foods and cow's milk are heavily subsidized by the federal government relative to plant-based options.

Under AB 558, schools would receive additional state funding for serving a plant-based entree and plant-based milk and would also receive support for staff training, student engagement, recipe development, and other technical assistance needed to help public schools boost participation rates and successfully serve plant-based foods.

AAP-CA strongly supports AB 558. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wendy Hunter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Wendy Hunter, MD FAAP  
Member, State Government Affairs Committee  
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP Leadership