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April 2, 2007

The Honorable Gene Mullin
Chair, Committee on Education
California State Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for AB 92 from the Sponsor

Dear Assembly Member Mullin:

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is pleased to sponsor AB 92, legislation authored by Assembly Member Bonnie Garcia to improve nutrition, health and academic performance for thousands of low-income students in California public schools.

CFPA's mission is to improve the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. This purpose is most readily achieved through policy reform that expands and strengthens the federal nutrition programs. One of these programs is the School Breakfast Program (SBP), permanently established by Congress in 1968 and consistently evaluated ever since as an important resource with which to improve academic performance, as well as nutrition and health, for low-income students.

Indeed, decades of studies demonstrate how uniquely effective the SBP is in preparing students for a day of learning. In recognition of the program's efficacy, and consistent with the Legislature's special solicitude for low-income students, the Legislature many years ago established and has zealously protected a separate, state-funded reimbursement, in addition to the regular federal reimbursement, for low-income students' breakfasts. This combined funding has enabled more than 8,300 schools in California to operate breakfast programs.

Unfortunately, despite SBP's unquestioned benefits, over 2,000 California schools still fail to offer breakfast to their students. Of particular concern are the more than 500 schools currently without breakfast programs even though these schools enroll such a high percentage of low-income students that they qualify for special "severe need" federal reimbursement on top of all the regular state

and federal reimbursement. AB 92 would require these severe-need schools to provide the School Breakfast Program, thus opening access to the most important meal of the academic day for thousands of low-income students, as well as for their fellow students from higher income households.

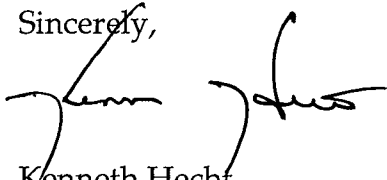
Years of experience in California show that schools of virtually any profile – small or large, urban or rural, high-income or low-income – can successfully operate the breakfast program. But in the event that any school believes it cannot provide breakfast without sustaining a financial loss, the bill provides a waiver process by which such a school can establish its circumstances and seek a waiver of the breakfast requirement. Thus, no school is being asked to do the impossible.

It is important to note that AB 569 (Garcia, 2006) directs the California Department of Education to conduct a study to determine the precise number of schools that would be subject to AB 92's breakfast requirement and to assess the costs and financial feasibility of requiring the severe need schools to operate the SBP. The study is to be reported back to the Legislature no later than April 30, 2008, and its results undoubtedly will clarify and inform the final language of AB 92.

AB 92 will ensure that thousands of low-income students in the state's neediest schools have the nutrition they need each school day to make the most of their education, that these schools operate as effectively as they can for all their students, and that California not lose the generous federal funding that the breakfast program can bring to the state.

CFPA respectfully urges you and your fellow committee members to support AB 92.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Hecht', written over a horizontal line.

Kenneth Hecht
Executive Director

Cc: Assembly Member Bonnie Garcia