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The Honorable Carol Liu
Chair, Senate Education Committee
State Capitol, Room 2083
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 334 (Leyva) - Support

Dear Senator Liu:

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) supports SB 334, which would require yearly testing of water provided to students and staff in California schools, make the results of that testing publicly available and increase the number of water access points on campus.

CFPA is a statewide policy and advocacy organization whose mission is to improve the health and well being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. This includes access to more healthful beverages, specifically water. Increasing water consumption is a simple and effective obesity prevention strategy, which is why CFPA has and continues to support policy solutions that will improve access to and consumption of water among students.

In 2010, California enacted SB 1413, which requires schools to provide students with access to free drinking water during meal times in school food service areas. CFPA supported SB 1413 and has played a key role in helping schools implement the law as well as researching and developing additional policy recommendations that will improve student access to and consumption of water. Concerns about water safety and quality are, unfortunately, one of the top five challenges that schools face in implementing SB 1413.¹

Because children spend most of their day on campus, access to free, clean drinking water in schools is critically important. Research suggests that substituting water for sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) could help reduce the number of calories – up to 235 fewer calories – that children and adolescents consume per day.² In addition to water's role in maintaining a healthy weight, replacing SSBs with free, tap water, which is often fluoridated, can help prevent tooth decay, one of the most common chronic diseases among children. Improved water access also helps our students stay hydrated, focused and ready to learn.³⁻⁴ Making

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water the default beverage in schools can help our students incorporate water consumption into their daily routine.

Schools share a responsibility to provide clean drinking water to students. There are known regions in our state, especially low-income Central Valley communities, where students attend schools without access to safe drinking water. Yet, the testing of water quality and safety in schools has been piecemeal. Amending the Education Code to require the routine testing of water in schools would help ensure that we are providing our students with safe drinking water and would provide the state with data that can be used to better allocate resources to improve tap drinking water infrastructure.

Furthermore, making water-testing results publicly available to students, parents and staff will help build confidence in the water source and increase consumption. In order to do so in an efficient manner, we recommend the use of existing reporting mechanisms, such as the school accountability report card.

Lastly, the current student to water access point ratio inadequately meets the needs of students, so improving the ratio will help increase water access on campus.⁵ Access will improve not only when and where meals are served and eaten, but also throughout the school day. This will encourage students and staff to consume more water.

Schools are a great place to start promoting water consumption, which is why there is both a state and federal requirement to make water more accessible to students. California can continue to lead the nation by advancing policy solutions to provide safe drinking water in schools.

For these reasons, CFPA respectfully urges your “Aye” vote on SB 334. Thank you in advance for your support of legislation that will help improve the safety, quality and appeal of water offered to students and staff on school campuses across the state.

Sincerely,



Ariana Oliva
Nutrition Policy Advocate

References

¹Braff-Guajardo, E., Hecht, K., Hampton, K.E., Brindis, C.D., Grumbach, J.M., Patel, A.I. Policy Brief: Fulfilling the Promise of Free Water in K-12 Schools. (2010). Retrieved from: <http://waterinschools.org/pdfs/FulfillingThePromiseOfFreeWater2012.pdf>

²Wang, YC et al. “Impact of Change in Sweetened Caloric Beverage Consumption on Energy Intake Among Children and Adolescents.” *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*. Vol.163, No. 4, April 2009.

³Ismail AI, Sohn W, Lim S, Willem JM. Predictors of Dental Caries Progression in Primary Teeth. *J Dent Res*. 2009;88(3):270-275.

⁴Edmonds CJ, Jeffes B., “Does Having a Drink Help You Think? 6-7 Year Old Children Show Improvements in Cognitive Performance from Baseline to Test After Having a Drink of Water. *Appetite*. 2009;53(3): 469-472.

⁵Duwayne, B., School Building, Health and Sanitation Code Requirement – Code Compliance Responsibility. (1999). Retrieved from: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/lr/fa/sf/sfpd9902sanicode.asp>.