



SPUR

San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

May 19, 2021

The Honorable Senator Anthony J. Portantino
Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
State Capitol, Room 2206
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 364 (Skinner) – Support

Dear Chair Portantino:

On behalf of SPUR, we are writing to share our support for SB 364. The Free School Meals for All Act would make big strides towards reducing hunger while also supporting the local food economy in California.

By providing two free meals to any student in California who wanted them, and making school meals available to students more easily when school is out of session, the bill would help reduce food insecurity among California’s families.¹ And, by providing additional funding to school districts to purchase products from California farmers and producers, the bill would infuse millions of dollars annually into the state’s agricultural sector, boosting the local food economy and all the benefits it provides.²

For these reasons, we support SB 364 and respectfully request that the legislature augment what the governor has already proposed in the May Revise to fully fund the programs outlined in the legislation.

Currently the bill lacks provisions that would ensure that the funding for school districts to purchase California-grown products goes to California farmers and producers. To ensure program integrity we have been working with some of the bill sponsors to develop language that would provide for auditing and enforcement. In consultation with school food service directors, food distributors, and others familiar with school food procurement, we have developed amendments that we believe would help strengthen the bill in this regard. We hope you will give them your highest consideration as discussion of the bill and budget move forward.

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¹ One of our recommendations from our report *Healthy Food Within Reach (2015)* is to maximize enrollment in school meals programs, which provide critical nutrition to many students, especially low-income student:

www.spur.org/foodaccess

² For more detail about the benefits of a regional food economy, see SPUR’s report *Locally Nourished (2013)*:

www.spur.org/locallynourished

If we can get you any additional information about SPUR's position, please let us know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Z.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eli Zigas
Food & Agriculture Policy Director

Katie Ettman
Food & Agriculture Senior Policy Associate

cc: Senator Nancy Skinner