



NOVATO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
**Food and Nutritional Services**

1320 LYNWOOD DRIVE, NOVATO CA 94947 (415) 892-2115

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April 11, 2007

The Honorable Carole Migden  
Senate District 3  
California State Capitol  
Sacramento, Ca 95814  
**Fax** - 916-651-4003

**RE: Funding for School Nutrition Programs - SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Migden,

I am writing you today as the Food and Nutritional Services Director for the two largest school districts in Marin County, Novato Unified School District and San Rafael City Schools which represent over 13,000 students to express my support for **FULL FUNDING** for state meal reimbursements.

Notwithstanding a nominal 1 cent COLA increase in 2005, along with another this past July 1 of 1.5 cents, the state of California, a financial partner and operation supervisor of these meal programs, had not granted a reimbursement increase to cover the increasing cost of school food service programs since 1990. However, since 1990, costs associated with providing school meals have increased by \$1.31, while state reimbursements for school meals have increased by only two cents (\$0.02) during that same time period. The state currently reimburses school districts only \$0.21 for free and reduced price meals and provides no reimbursement to school districts for meals sold at full price.

This lack of financial support has created a severe financial strain on the budgets of our food service programs, not only for food, but for labor, insurance benefits, facilities, utilities, maintenance and food service equipment. School food service programs have had, therefore, to rely on profits garnered from the sale of a la carte foods and beverages in order to cover losses in the full meal programs. In 2005, the Legislature passed with strong support and participation from California School Nutrition Association (CSNA), SB 12 and SB 965 which will ban the sale of non-nutritional a la carte foods and beverages from K-12 campuses.

I also strongly support current legislation that brings school food service back to offering only healthy food items to youth because it is the right thing to support student health, however, it must be done in a way that allows the school meals program to balance the budget and stay in business. Without legislation to support funding for the increased costs to provide higher quality food, school food service programs will continue to struggle to meet the demands of the new requirements.

We understand that students must consume a variety of healthy foods each day that are packed with nutrients for them to be healthy and excel in the classroom. We believe that our programs allow us to “nuture the body, so teachers can “enhance the minds”.



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Page 2 of 2 pages

In Marin County, the School Food & Nutritional Services Department has worked hard over the last few years to improve the quality of meals offered to our children. We would like to make even greater changes such as improving the variety of meals and improving the food service facilities, however, we are financially limited by the current Federal reimbursement rates for the School Lunch Program, which are currently based on national averages. Amidst these challenges, we want you to know that we have made the following important healthful improvements to the foods we serve:

- ✓ We DO NOT *fry foods* and have limited foods with *trans fats*
- ✓ Our meals contain < 30% fat and <10% saturated fat
- ✓ Our meals are low in sodium and sugar
- ✓ We serve fresh fruits and vegetables every day
- ✓ We offer low fat milk with no growth hormones

We recognize that the improvements to our program thus far are just the first steps in bringing much needed changes to our food service program.

As a member of CSNA, I support **FULL FUNDING** for State meal reimbursements as outlined and presented by school and nutrition representatives that appeared before the Budget Subcommittees in both houses of the Legislature recently.

Sincerely,

Miguel Villarreal

Director Food and Nutritional Services

CC:

Members of the Senate & Assembly Budget Sub Committees

The Honorable Jared Huffman, Assembly District 6