

# California Senate Bill 364 (Skinner)

## Free School Meals for All Act of 2021

### The Bill

[SB 364](#), the Free School Meals for All Act of 2021, would establish free school meals for all California students, and provide every child with breakfast and lunch while promoting access to healthy, freshly prepared food grown by California farmers. The bill prioritizes low-income children, ensures that schools are adequately funded for their meal programs, and maximizes the drawdown of federal dollars for California school meals. The legislation is co-authored by 30 legislators across California, and has a broad coalition of support.

### The Problem

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, over two million California children were experiencing food insecurity and struggling to receive adequate nutrition. Now, as schools are closed and families struggle to pay bills, "food insecurity in California has skyrocketed to levels never before seen." This hunger crisis hits Black and Latinx families the hardest, with households of color with children reporting food insecurity twice that of white households.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has taken steps to allow the continued service of free school meals as many schools across the country remain physically closed for classes. Under the current rules if any child needs food, they can receive a meal or multiple meals for free at a school site. However, this de-facto free meal program is set to expire September 30th, 2021, taking away a critical nutritional resource from children and families as they continue to experience economic hardship.

### The Solution

Schools and essential food service workers have proven themselves to be trusted community lifelines for students and families. [SB 364](#) would provide funding to continue serving free meals to all students **after** the pandemic. The bill also establishes the Better Out of School Time (BOOST) Nutrition Program to prevent child hunger during regularly scheduled school breaks lasting a week or longer, or a campus closure caused by a natural or public health disaster, or other state of emergency.

Aside from reducing child hunger, a body of evidence shows that receiving proper nutrition benefits child development, behavior, ability to learn, and the creation of lifelong healthy habits. California's roughly 6.2 million K-12 students are in the midst of obtaining an education that will have monumental impacts on the rest of their lives, and this bill will ensure that each one of them has the nutrition they need to learn and thrive — a great equalizer for all students regardless of family income. Moreover, sourcing more school food locally will bolster the state's economy and support the resiliency of our California farmers.

### Bill Launch Press Release

[Link to Coalition Announcement Press Release In Support of SB 364](#)

[Link to Senator Skinner's Office Announcement Press Release on SB 364](#)

### Contact Information

Download our Template Letter of Support [here](#)

For more information, or if [you'd like to support](#) SB 364, please contact [info@schoolmealsforall.org](mailto:info@schoolmealsforall.org)