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CENTER FOR
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Governor Newsom Proposes \$70+ million
for Healthy School Meals in 2020-21 Budget***

Coalition Celebrates Victory for California Children, Labor & Farmers

BERKELEY, CALIF., JANUARY 10, 2020 ... Students across the state may soon be able to enjoy more fresh, nutritious food in school meals, thanks to a new budget proposal introduced today by Governor Gavin Newsom in his 2020-21 preliminary budget.

This budget proposal, if signed into law, would provide at least \$70 million in funding—a 40 percent increase—to strengthen food service programs’ efforts to improve the quality of school meals. This will support efforts to purchase and serve more freshly prepared, locally grown food, and fuel farm-to-school and sustainability initiatives.

“We know these funds will help children across the state gain access to more locally-sourced, healthy, freshly prepared school meals, give school food service staff the tools to succeed, and bolster local California economies through purchasing from local growers and farmers,” says **Kat Taylor**, Founder of TomKat Foundation and a key partner in the movement to overhaul California Food for California Kids. “We look forward to continuing work with the Governor’s Office, First Partner Siebel Newsom, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Secretary Ross, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Thurmond, legislative leadership, and the dozens of allies to advance this shared vision.”

A diverse coalition of organizations, including the Center for Ecoliteracy, NextGen California, California School Employees Association, and The Office of Kat Taylor — as well as leaders from dozens of organizations in agriculture, education, and public health — have been working tirelessly to make the case for a targeted investment in school nutrition. Their efforts build upon the foundational work and ongoing leadership of CDFA Secretary Ross and State Superintendent Thurmond.

Ben Valdepeña, president of the California School Employees Association, a strong supporter of the investment, said, “Our members who work as cooks, servers, clerks and delivery drivers see first-hand the positive impact providing a nutritious meal can have on students. Without food, students cannot learn, and good nutrition enables students to meet their education and physical potential. We are pleased Governor Newsom has made healthy food service programs a priority.”

The executive director of NextGen California, **Arnold Sowell Jr.**, applauded the announcement. "Investing in programs aimed at improving the health and well-being of students across our state is critically important. Many of our students face food insecurity and hunger, relying on school meals as a stable source of nourishment. This effort is a bold step forward. We look forward to continuing to partner with our stakeholder community to ensure that all California kids can thrive."

“This proposed investment is a huge victory for California kids and a well-earned accomplishment for those who have worked toward a better school food system,” says **Adam Kesselman**, executive director of the Center for Ecoliteracy, a Berkeley-based nonprofit that is dedicated to education for sustainable living in K-12 schools. “We hope the Governor and the California legislature will include these funds in the final state budget for many years to come.”

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The [Center for Ecoliteracy](#) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to cultivating education for sustainable living. Its key initiative is [California Food for California Kids](#),[®] which supports systems change by improving children's health, education, and the state's economy while teaching students where food comes from and how it reaches the table.